

# THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy  
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

June 1968

Published by  
The Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy  
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

Printed by  
Piyush Kanti Das Gupta  
at the Santiniketan Press  
Santiniketan, West Bengal

## FOREWORD

The Proceedings of the first All India Seminar held in March, 1965 at the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University, are being issued in the present Volume. The Proceedings were edited by Prof. T. R. V. Murti, was Director of the Centre up till June 30, 1967. It is regretted that due to several factors, these Proceedings could not be made available earlier.

April 21, 1968  
Varanasi

N. K. DEVARAJA  
Director, Centre of Advanced  
Study in Philosophy, Banaras  
Hindu University

## PREFACE

Collected together in the volume are the papers contributed to the Seminar on the Concept of Philosophy which was conducted by the Centre of Advanced Study—Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University in March, 1965. In the choice of the contributors an attempt has been made to present several points of view and the subject. Difference in standpoint is intrinsic to philosophy to the present volume well reflects the characteristic feature. The papers are printed almost in the form in which they were presented. Discussions which followed are same of the papers are given separately. I hope this would be found useful in understanding the issues raised in the papers. I am grateful to the writers of the papers and the other participants in the Seminar for their contribution.

T. R. V. MURTI



## CONTENTS

Foreword			
Preface			
The Concept of Philosophy	N. V. Banerjee	...	1
The Concept of Philosophy	J. N. Chubb	...	13
My Conception of			
Philosophy	R. Das	...	31
Concept of Philosophy	G. R. Malkani	...	40
The Concept of Philosophy	T. R. V. Murti	...	49
Philosophy and Theology,			
Reason and Faith	R. Panikkar	...	59
The Nature of Philosophical			
Questions & Method	Rajnarain and Srichandra	...	64
The Concept of Philosophy	K. J. Shah	...	75
The Concept of Philosophy	R. K. Tripathi	...	91
The Concept of Philosophy			
(Proceedings)		...	98
Appendix		...	107

## THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

N. V. BANERJEE

### *Part—I*

Of all questions which concern philosophy in some manner or other, the most fundamental and yet the most difficult is, perhaps the one that relates to the nature of philosophy itself. It is fundamental for the simple reason that, unless one is quite clear as to what philosophy is or rather what it is about, whatever one does in the name of practising philosophy may not, strictly speaking, be philosophizing, but may instead be as good as myth-making or else may amount to encroaching upon another field of investigations with a determinate and well-defined status, say, any of the positive sciences. That this points to at least an aspect of the actual philosophical situation considered as a whole is likely to be brought home to any discerning student of the history of philosophy. As regards the difficulty of the question under consideration, it is conspicuous by its reflection in the lack of unanimity among philosophers as to the *nature* of philosophical problems, the *method* of investigating the problems supposed to be philosophical and the *solutions* that are in need of being offered to them. And this speaks of the fact that philosophy is like what metaphysics, according to Kant, turns out to be—a battlefield of endless controversies.

The determination of the status of philosophy should, then, consist in the acceptance of either of the two alternatives involved in the disjunctive proposition :—philosophy is either a pseudo-discipline or it is a genuine field of investigations and yet is in a class apart from all other academic disciplines in that, whereas questions such as 'What is science?' 'What is history?' etc. are legitimate, the question as to what philosophy is, is irrelevant and uncalled for. Now since the admission of the former alternative to the rejection of the latter would obviously amount to the condemnation of one of the perennial features of human civilization and the consequent subscription to a distorted view of human nature, there seems to be no escape from the recognition of philosophy as a legitimate sphere of the adventure of the human mind. But then, if the question as to what philosophy is needs to be vetoed, the question still remains as to what one is required to do with a view to practising philosophy. And this suggests

the substitution of the question as to what philosophy *does* for the question as to what philosophy *is*, and indeed points to the need for what may be called the *operational* definition of philosophy. The conception of philosophy as an activity which is thus envisaged, though not altogether new, has been brought to the fore-front of philosophical investigations in recent times and indeed should be of great service in the understanding of what philosophy is about.

Nevertheless the question arises whether the conception of philosophy as an *activity* can really serve to make an improvement upon the prevailing philosophical situation and, in particular, save philosophy from the danger of its being reduced to a battle-field of endless controversies. The answer would in the first instance depend upon how exactly philosophical activity comes to be conceived. In this regard it would be worthwhile to consider a view which has been put forward in our day and has proved to be of far-reaching influence in the philosophical world. According to this view that activity is strictly philosophical which is devoted to the clarification of language by means of the logical, as distinguished from the grammatical analysis of language, with reference to its *meaning* or its mere use, as the case may be. But then, the option to refer either to meaning or to mere use to which linguistic analysis is thus thrown open, is apt to make for, and, as a matter of fact, has brought about the division of the school of linguistic analysis into two rival camps. Moreover, the acceptance of the verification theory of meaning by some of the practitioners of linguistic analysis, namely, the logical positivists, and the rejection of it by others also point to a schism within the school of linguistic philosophy. Furthermore, no less acute is the difference among the analysts of language in connection with their decision of the question as to whether the language that is in need of logical analysis should be ordinary language or scientific language or language of any other kind.

But apart from these difficulties and others which we have left out of account, the question that stands out is: Why should language be the sole concern of philosophical activity and why should philosophy be identified with linguistic analysis? In raising this question it is, however, far from us to express any doubt about the importance of the analysis of language in philosophical investigations. But we wish to suggest that in the field of philosophy the importance of



linguistic analysis may lie only in its being a means to an end, namely, philosophizing, and not in its being an end in itself, and that, treated as an end in itself, linguistic analysis can at best be a supplement to the task of lexicography. In its preoccupation with the consideration of language, linguistic analysis is, however, exclusively concerned with something *given* instead of anything *imponderable*. And on this account it has an advantage over the attempt, for example, to determine the nature of *reality* as distinguished from *appearance* or to construct a world-view on the basis of scientific laws, which, according to certain schools of speculative philosophy, constitutes the philosophical activity *par excellence*, but which entails an uneasy and unwarrantable concern with the *imponderable*. But this can provide no justification for the conception of philosophical activity as linguistic analysis except on the gross misunderstanding of the philosopher as a co-worker in the field of lexicography.

What follows is not, however, that the consideration of the nature of philosophical activity is as useless with regard to the understanding of the concept of philosophy as is the consideration of the nature of philosophy itself. On the contrary, as previously indicated, the peculiarity of philosophy, as distinguished from other academic disciplines, conveys the imperative demand that philosophy be construed to be primarily an *activity*. And, what is more, in order that philosophy may turn out to be an academic discipline with a determinate status of its own, instead of remaining condemned to a state of conflict, perplexity and uncertainty, philosophical activity should be conceived to be *analytical* and not *speculative*. But then, the question, indeed the most fundamental question, that needs to be decided with a view to the understanding of the nature of philosophical activity is: What exactly is the *datum* which is in need of philosophical analysis? The answer to this question would in the first instance depend upon the consideration of the faults of age-old speculative philosophy as well as of the analytical philosophy of recent times. But then, the consideration of their faults of *commission* would not only be tedious but would at best enable one to extend the field of controversies that philosophy has been. So in fulfilment of the demand of feasibility and propriety one would, in this context, be well advised to consider the fault of *omission* that vitiates speculative philosophy and also linguistic analysis regarded as philosophical activity *par excellence*.

Speculative philosophy is that kind of philosophy which is conspicuous for its alliance (whether conscious or unconscious) with mysticism, and as such it is characterized by the tendency to seek content in the contemplation of imponderables such as the 'absolute', the 'thing in itself', the 'soul', 'immortality', etc. But while mysticism itself is not to blame, but, on the contrary, deserves a legitimate place in the conduct of the affairs of human life, philosophy's alliance with mysticism not only proves to be a hindrance to the proper function of mysticism, but compels philosophy itself to ignore the importance of whatever is ponderable, especially the actual world of man and nature. The ignoring of the importance of nature on the part of speculative philosophy, however, does not matter. For there is science to recognize the due importance of nature and to study nature in the most appropriate manner. But, the ignoring of the importance of man on the part of philosophy is not remediable in a similar manner. For the so-called science of man, including branches of knowledge such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and the like, is ultimately based on the understanding of man as one of the many items which make up the world, that is, on the analogy of nature, and so is unable to restore man to the position of importance which is his due. In fact, science *qua* science, while being a creation of man, is by its very definition committed to the ignoring of the importance of man. And what is thus true about science, it may be added, is more so about technology which curiously enough, is the product of the application of science as a matter of the free choice of man himself. However that may be, speculative philosophy, while being, on the ordinary view, diametrically opposed to science, is, in the final analysis, united with the latter in the ignoring of the importance of man. And this argues the futility of speculative philosophy, while leaving the position of science and technology unassailable. The point here is really as follows.

The understanding of nature is unquestionably one of the imperative human demands. But, in order that its possibility may be guaranteed, it should as far as possible be free from anthropocentricity to which it is naturally prone. This is precisely the reason why it is incumbent upon science to ignore the importance of man. So the non-human outlook of science should be taken for granted, instead of being condemned or even challenged. Technology, however

signifies the return of science to man and indeed is pronouncedly anthropo-centric, being primarily intended to contribute to the fulfilment of certain needs of man. But then, these needs, despite their variety and gradations, are either directly or remotely biological in character. And the fulfilment of biological needs, while it may, in certain cases or certain circumstances, contribute to the enrichment of the strictly human qualities of man, may, in certain others, lead to inhuman consequences. So technology is likely to serve as a means of the dehumanization of man and thus produce a result infinitely worse than that which is attendant upon the proper business of science, namely, the ignoring of the importance of man.

We are then left with the question of the possibility of the understanding of the human situation on the basis of a proper recognition of the importance of man, which is as imperative a human demand as is the understanding of the world of nature. In view of the fault of omission on the part of science in general and the so-called sciences of man in particular and the productivity of inhuman consequences as well as strictly human ones on the part of technology, we, perhaps, have no option but to look up to philosophy for the answer to this question. But speculative philosophy, as we have already seen, cannot be the kind of philosophy that is in demand here. And if by philosophy be meant, as perhaps it should be taken to mean, the academic discipline which is primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with the understanding of the human situation, then speculative philosophy can have no claim to recognition as philosophy properly so called.

Let us now consider the case of that species of philosophy which is characterizable as *empiricist* or, in a more general way, as *phenomenological*. Philosophy of this kind seems to be peculiar in that it is concerned with the investigation of our *experience*, but experience not only of *nature* but of *ourselves*. That being so, it may be said to have the understanding of the human situation at least as a part of its business so as to deserve to be regarded as strictly philosophical. But this is not convincing as it at first sight seems to be. For the whole field of our experience, including our experience of nature and our experience of ourselves, is open to an exhaustive investigation between the natural sciences and psychology, so that, it may be contended, philosophy as *phenomenology*, having nothing left



for its investigation, would be either indistinguishable from the natural sciences on the one hand and from psychology on the other or else be an unnecessary superfluity. And if it is still held that phenomenological philosophy has a distinct role to play, then the reply would be that it can do so by shedding its phenomenological character and turning out to be a variant of speculative philosophy which, as we have been insisting, is not philosophy properly so called. But apart from all this, the main difficulty of phenomenological philosophy from our point of view is that it is unable to offer a proper understanding of the human situation for the simple reason that, far from being able to recognise the importance of man it is, consistently with its standpoint, committed to a grotesque conception of human existence such as the conception of it as a 'bundle' of mental phenomena introduced by David Hume or, still worse, the conception of it as a 'passing thought' familiarised by some of the later followers of Hume. Since that which is grotesque for example, a bundle of mental phenomena or a passing thought, is hardly preferable to that which is imponderable, such as the 'soul', philosophy as phenomenology cannot be said to have any advantage over speculative philosophy. Be it noted, however, that the grotesque, after all, is not far removed from the imponderable, and, consequently, that in the context of the understanding of the human situation philosophy as phenomenology is in alliance with speculative philosophy.

The difficulty of phenomenological philosophy with regard to the understanding of man and the human situation, however, ultimately lies in its treatment of man as an *object* which presupposes the arbitrary and unwarrantable obliteration of the distinction between man and nature. And as regards this difficulty, an attempt may be made to resolve it by means of an *indirect* approach to the problem of the understanding of the human situation, be it generally behaviouristic or specifically so, namely, merely *linguistic*. But such an attempt is doomed to failure for the simple reason that behaviour in general and language in particular being, after all, *objects*, no highway can be built between them and what does not admit of being treated as an object, namely, man.

The recognition, in recent times, of the all-importance of language in philosophical investigations is, however, of special significance in

---

view of the fact that language is of man and indeed is all-pervasive in the world of human affairs. But it seems that philosophy of language in its various forms is blinded by a sort of fanaticism resting upon the view that language is, as it were, *sui generis*, and not a creation of man. In this connection it is worth while to note that philosophy of language, being but a kind of logic, is a tribute of remembrance to a dogma that was forced upon the philosophical world by no less influential a philosopher than Hegel—the aggressively intellectualist dogma that logic is the essence of philosophy. It is far from us to suggest, however, that logic is of no concern to philosophy. What is meant is that logic, however it may be related to philosophy, is conspicuous for its affinity to, and alliance with mathematics, and that these two academic disciplines together with the humanistic studies, including philosophies, both old and new, are in some manner or other, indifferent to the importance of man and the fundamental problem or problems of human life. In view of this one may, by adapting a significant utterance of the English poet Pope, make bold to proclaim that the proper study of philosophy is man and that it is by undertaking the analysis of the human situation that philosophy may bring its age-old nomadic career to an end and come into its own.

#### *Part—II*

What I have so far been trying to do is to ascertain what philosophical activity is *not*; and on the positive side I have had the opportunity merely to suggest that this activity is none other than the analysis of the human situation on the basis of a due recognition of the importance of man. What is feasible for me to do further on this occasion is, however, to state briefly and in a cavalier way some of the essential features of the analysis in question. It needs to be observed at the outset that no attempt to analyse the human situation would be fruitful or even worthwhile except in so far as it is realised once and for all that, in spite of the diverse theories of evolution, the emergence of the human race is an enigma. For, even granted that the developments that have taken place within each of the three domains of matter, life and mind may be accounted for, there can hardly be any hope of success in the explanation of



the emergence of life and especially consciousness with all its attendant features which serve to differentiate man from the rest of the universe. And this demands the admission of mankind as an ultimate datum—ultimate in the sense that it admits of no aetiological treatment, but not in the sense that it should be relegated to the limbo of mystical silence. On the contrary, it is fit for analysis with a view to the discovery of its peculiarity and especially its deeper significance. And the analysis of the human situation thus envisaged may be regarded as the proper task of philosophy.

The conception of mankind as an ultimate datum is, however, far from suggesting that man is an isolated being. The fact, on the contrary, is that his status is unintelligible except with reference to his relation to the physical and biological world on the one hand and his relation to his fellows on the other. As regards his relation to the physical or inanimate world, it is characterizable as *basic otherness*, in view of the consideration that there can be no inter-communication, whether linguistic or merely behavioural, between man and inorganic nature. Allied with but distinguishable from basic otherness is the relation of *mere otherness* which may subsist between man and certain species of animals in virtue of the impossibility of linguistic inter-communication and yet the possibility of behavioural inter-communication between them. And, not to speak of mere otherness, even basic otherness does not admit of being construed *dualistically*, because nothing can be spoken of as an *other to* something else if the two are dualistically related. Judged in this light, these two kinds of relations together constitute the unquestionable foundation of our knowledge of the physico-biological world so as to liquidate the problem of the possibility of knowledge which has led to interminable controversies which make up the philosophical discipline known as epistemology. It is far from me to suggest, however, that epistemology is a pseudo-discipline, having no genuine problem to deal with. What I have really in view is that the problem which epistemology is required to treat does not concern knowledge as such, but aberrations of or exceptions to knowledge illustrated in illusions, hallucinations and dream.

In this connection it is worthwhile to note in the first place that from the nature of the case, there is bound to be difference especially in respect of quality between our knowledge of the physical world

and our knowledge of the biological world, especially certain species of animals, —the former being superior to the latter. And this would serve to account for the strictly scientific character of the physical sciences as compared with the biological sciences. Secondly, the relations of basic otherness and mere otherness, while being knowledge-giving, are not exclusively so, but may evoke *feelings, emotions, and actions*. Hence is evident the basic affinity between the cognitive and the non-cognitive aspects of mental life, which has more often than not been ignored by philosophers with the result that philosophy has had to pass through the unnecessary conflict between intellectualism and anti-intellectualism. Thirdly — and this especially significant — basic otherness and mere otherness are not sacrosanct. On the contrary, both are open to neutralization in and through *empathy* to which the primitive man and the artist, in particular, the poet, are especially susceptible — *empathy*, the mental state which consists in the projection of oneself even into an inanimate object. The recognition of the human attitude which begets *empathy*, as we shall immediately see, is of special importance in the understanding of man's relation to his fellows.

Man's relation to his fellows cannot be construed to be basic otherness or even mere otherness except on the misunderstanding of man as an *object*, as an item analogous to other items which make up the world. But due to the unavoidable biological birth of man and inexplicable anomaly of human nature consequent thereupon, he is seized with the illusory idea of himself and his fellows as *mere individuals* or insular beings admitting of no relation among themselves except that of mutual otherness. Hence is evident the unwarrantability of the doctrine of the *cogito* which was regarded as *fundamentally* important in the very beginning of the history of modern philosophy in Europe. And the attempt to overcome the defect of this doctrine by means of the doctrine of the Absolute is a failure and a subterfuge, amounting as it does to substituting imponderable for an illusion. The inherent difficulties of the conception of man's relation to his fellows as being ultimately basic otherness or even mere otherness are, however, as follows.

In the first place, this conception amounts to ignoring the importance of linguistic and/or behavioural inter-communication between man and man. Secondly, it is committed to the objectionable view

that one's fellows are *objects* of one's *knowledge*. But this view, besides implying the unwarrantable conception of man as *object*, is not literally significant either. The reason is that my so-called knowledge of my fellows is really my knowledge of their body and/or their bodily states or bodily behaviour, and that these, being themselves objects, cannot be the same as my fellows themselves, who should be as non-objective as I am. The point that needs to be borne in mind in this connection is, however, that the words 'me', 'him' and 'them', although they are grammatically the respective accusatives of 'I', 'he' and 'they', do not, logically speaking, mean I as known, he as known and they as known, but unavoidably refer to body and/or bodily states or bodily behaviour in each case. And this serves to indicate the nature of the linguistic muddle into which philosophers are apt to fall and, in consequence, admit such things as our *knowledge* of ourselves and our *knowledge* of our fellows. Thirdly, granted that our knowledge of ourselves as well as our fellows is as admissible as is our knowledge of the inorganic and the organic world, this would only make for the possibility of what may be called science of man and not for the possibility of philosophy. For science is intended to be sufficient unto itself so that it has no room to make for philosophy regarded as distinct from itself nor, on the other hand, can philosophy derive from the results of scientific investigations.

It must be admitted, however, that the idea of oneself as a mere individual or an insular being, while being illusory, is universal among mankind, and that we ordinarily think, feel and act as if we are *other* to one another. But then, the prospect of the mitigation of this non-human situation of man is opened up by *sympathy*. Sympathy, an offspring of the same human attitude as begets empathy, consists in one's feeling with whether in the manner of rejoicing with or sorrowing with, one's fellows. As such it is, indeed, of inestimable human value, in special consideration of the fact that man, under the influence of an all-pervasive illusion, is prone to treat his fellows as *others* to him. Even so sympathy as a state of the human mind is, from the nature of the case, *contingent* and *unstable*. And, what is more, the person sympathised with is obviously not on a par with, but is an *object* to the person who sympathises with him, so that their illusory but inveterate otherness to each other is after all left unconquered by sympathy.



The idea of the conquest of *otherness* is, however, far from suggesting that man should *become* what he is *not*. On the contrary, it is a call for the termination of his illusory view of himself as a *mere individual* and his return to himself or his authentic being. Man, while being a part of nature, is yet apart from nature. But this does not consist in his being *separate from* nature as philosophers have variously conceived him to be, but in his being essential to or held in *communion* with others of his kind. And this speaks of his authentic being, his liberated existence which is hidden from himself by the bewitching influence of his illusory idea of himself as a mere individual, a being held in bondage. Hence is the inevitability of the problem of human liberation—liberation, not in any recondite or superhuman sense, but in the strictly human sense of man's self-expression, his entrance into the lives of his fellows.

Sympathy and other noble sentiments allied with it, such as charity and benevolence, of course, signify attempts to solve the problem of human liberation. But the achievements of these attempts do not really reach beyond, but remain confined within the bounds of human bondage, leaving as they do the task of the conquest of otherness unfulfilled. In fact, sympathy and its allies constitute the foundation of *society* which is expressible in terms of the formula 'I and others', but which is distinguishable from and indeed is no substitute for the realm of liberated persons or strictly human beings, expressible in terms of the formula 'I *with* others'. Since knowledge, instead of conquering otherness, presupposes, and indeed flourishes on the basis of the admission of otherness, and since sympathy and its allies are thus unequal to the task of the conquest of otherness, are we to conclude that the problem of liberation as formulated here is insoluble and hence absurd? But it would be rather hasty to arrive at this conclusion. For we have yet to consider whether the human *will* is able to achieve what the cognitive and the affective capacities of the human mind are found unable to do.

It is indeed curious that, whereas philosophers have taken knowledge feeling and emotion, and especially the first of these, into serious consideration, they have taken almost no pains to investigate the specific functions of the will. Strictly speaking, the will is not *blind* as Schopenhauer conceived it to be; it is definitely *rational*. As such, it deserves to be called Practical Reason. Practical Reason,

not in the narrow sense consequent upon Kant's conception of it as being confined to morality, but in the wider sense of a power of the human mind capable of functioning at least in three different ways, namely, as the will to create, the will to believe and the will to adjust. And there is, perhaps, no doubt that these three aspects of the will otherwise called Practical Reason, respectively constitute the foundations of art, religion and morality, and—although philosophers have seldom brought themselves to realise this—that art, religion and morality are, in the final analysis, attempts on the part of man to conquer the illusory and yet inveterate relation of mutual otherness between himself and his fellows and thus establish his essentiality to, or *communion* with, them. Whether these attempts may be successful or not is, however, a question which it is incumbent upon philosophy to decide. But so far as I am concerned at present, this question obviously presents itself to be too big for me to deal with. So all that is feasible for me to do here is merely to observe that art, religion and morality are conspicuous for their revelation of some system of symbols or other regarded as a new dimension of reality, and intended to be a refuge for man where he may have a sort of transcendental escape from the ills proceeding from his illusory but tragic state of loneliness or isolation from his fellows. Thus, in spite of the valuable service they may be said to have rendered to mankind through the ages, art, religion and morality are hardly of any help to philosophy in its treatment of the problem of human liberation. But this does not argue the impossibility or even the difficulty of philosophy, but is only a pointer to its autonomy or independence—its independence of art, religion and morality on the one hand and of science, mathematics and logic on the other.

In these discussions I have left more things unsaid than I have been able to say. But of all the things I have said at least one is especially important. And it is that philosophy is an autonomous academic discipline with certain problems of its own, and that of these problems the most urgent is that of the liberation of mankind, consisting in the direct communion of oneself and one's fellows.

## THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

J. N. CHUBB

I shall not attempt to give a direct answer to the question, "What is the concept of philosophy?", for such an answer would rest on unexamined presuppositions which themselves contain one among a number of possible answers to the question. The discussion of the question, what is the concept of Philosophy? belongs to that branch of Philosophy which may be called critical Philosophy, i. e. the Philosophy that seeks to become fully aware of itself as an intellectual activity and of its methods and presuppositions.

The fact that this subject has been chosen as a symposium subject shows that differences of opinion are possible and expected. These differences will, in my opinion, ultimately reflect differences in the realm of critical Philosophy. Hence it is profitable to concentrate on the problems of Critical Philosophy. Differences of opinion will surely arise here also, but this way of dealing with the problem will have the advantage of focussing the discussion at a level where it should properly be carried out. If we go to the root of things then perhaps we shall see eye to eye, or, if not, we may perhaps see why not; and that itself would be a major gain.

Hence my object is not to attempt an impersonal, 'objective' or neutral definition of Philosophy, for such a thing is not possible. Nor is it my intention to make a recommendation to the effect that a particular conception of Philosophy (my own) be accepted, for that is obviously an arbitrary procedure and would merely invite counter recommendations, equally arbitrary. It is, I think, wrong to assume that if we are not giving *the* answer to a philosophical problem we must necessarily be making a recommendation. There is an alternative procedure which can be seen in the recognition that every statement in Philosophy, *including* a statement about what philosophy is, will crystallise a whole way of looking at things, will, in fact, be a philosophical system in embryo.

My object, therefore, is to achieve an intellectual detachment from all philosophical systems, including my own and look at the philosophical situation. Here the aim is not to solve specific philosophical problems, but to become sensitively aware of what it is we do when we philosophise. It should, I think be possible to achieve the *Sakshi* attitude, at the level of the intellect. The method is a kind



of introspection, which may be called epistemological, to distinguish it from psychological introspection. It is not a mere reading off of what is given to internal sense, but involves a special capacity and a certain level of culture and sensitivity which all do not possess in equal measure.

Critical philosophy has to be distinguished from constructive philosophy whose activity is system-building in accordance with its basic commitments. In critical reflection there is awareness without ontological commitment. It is from this level that one should try to answer the question, what is Philosophy? Answers usually given to this question are 'dogmatic' in the sense that they reflect different biases which are the basic, logical commitments of divergent systems of thought. This point will become clear later when I set out the difference between reasoning in philosophy on the one hand and reasoning in the natural and mathematical sciences. Philosophical reasoning, I hope to show, is neither inductive nor deductive.

We arrive at the concept of philosophy through critical reflection, i. e. through awareness without ontological commitment. Hence the concept is not empirical in the sense that it is not obtained by a process of abstraction. It is an *a priori* concept, yet reached without argument, by a kind of intellectual penetration or imaginative divination. I find the empiricist view that there is no intellectual perception of a truth wholly mistaken and even self-contradictory, for, in the last resort, when all arguments are in and all investigations are completed, either one 'sees' or one does not 'see' the truth of the view one holds.

According to me a key to the understanding of the differences in points of view lies in a discussion of the relation between Logic and Ontology. The discussion aims to show how we come to make our ontological commitments. This, it is hoped, will reveal why different philosophers hold different views on the question: What is Philosophy? And even though differences cannot be ironed out, it is hoped that the discussion will be smoother, more fruitful and tolerant of each other's points of view.

I shall consider the relation between Logic and Ontology and present the view that Logic depends on Ontology for its existence and point of departure, while Ontology depends on Logic for self-expression and self-discovery. Let me first explain the use of these

key terms. By Ontology I mean a science which tells us what there is, but by Logic I do not mean a science at all. I use the word Logic to stand for a pattern of reasoning. It is the form and direction which our argument takes when we attempt the solution of philosophical problems. This use of the word logic is illustrated in the statement we sometimes make, "I understand the logic of your argument, though I do not agree with you". In this sense we can talk of different logics, without implying that there can be any alternatives to the laws of thought or the rules of reasoning.

Logic and Ontology, understood in this sense, are organically related, and hence, though the ontological commitment is more basic, in the sense that logic presupposes it, the relation is not one of temporal priority; nor, as I shall show later, is the latter merely analytically contained in the former, which is how the relation is understood in much of contemporary empiricist philosophy which gives a voluntarist account of first principles, though in its case ontology is replaced by its opposite, namely a total withdrawal from all ontology. Ontology sets logic going, but it is in the development of the latter that we become aware of our ontological commitments and further, perceive the relation between the two. Thus, while resting in Ontology, philosophy begins in Logic. There is no pre-logical understanding of our ontological commitments. For this reason philosophy and logic may be regarded as co-extensive, and yet, in an important sense, logic is not autonomous; it is conditioned by the ontological commitment which it seeks to make explicit and to which it is its business to give a rational form. Logic and ontology are related in much the same way in which concept and percept are related according to Kant. Logic without ontology is empty, and ontology without logic is blind. The task of logic—or we may say philosophy, since the two are co-extensive—is not to provide a proof or justification or any kind of ground for its conclusions, except within the limits of the ontological commitment to which it seeks to give expressions. On this view, there are philosophical propositions, but no philosophical conclusions, in the sense of propositions to which we are led by a neutral course of our reasoning.

In science conclusions are to some extent independent of the process of reasoning, since they can be subjected to the test of experience and confirmed or falsified independently of the process of



reasoning. In a philosophical enquiry "conclusions" cannot be abstracted from and verified independently of the process of reasoning by which it is determined. But this is not the point which I am making here. Philosophical reasoning is different in kind from scientific reasoning. The terminus of a piece of a scientific reasoning has no terminus and, therefore, no conclusion. If we are to talk of "conclusions" in philosophy at all, we will have to say that philosophical reasoning merely explicates foregone conclusions. If it is regarded as an argument to prove a conclusion, it could be said to commit a *petitio principii*.

We have learnt from the Greeks to regard philosophy as a free enquiry, unfettered by any kind of authority or assumptions. Thus we are adjured by Socrates to follow, not him but his arguments, to open our sails and let the winds of argument carry us where they will. This is a very attractive view, but contains a very serious ambiguity. The notion of philosophy as autonomous in the sense in which it is understood generally in the western philosophical tradition is true only within certain limits. The movement of thought is free, i. e. uncommitted, only within the framework of a system, but the system as a whole is not generated by free thinking; for thought cannot operate without an initial act of commitment. The philosopher is not carried along by winds of arguments which blow where they list. In so far as his thinking is purposive, he has, from the beginning, set his course and chosen his direction.

In this connection, it is relevant to reflect on what are called "first principles". It may be granted that philosophical reasoning is not inductive in the sense that its theories are not generalisations from experience. They are unlike scientific theories, even if the latter are regarded, not as generalisation, but as free creations, taking for their start a general contemplation of facts and leaping far beyond them in an act of imaginative divination. Such constructions, however much they reflect the initiative and spontaneity of the thinker, are at the mercy of the facts which they are meant to illumine. Philosophical theories are not, thus, factbound. They are not verifiable or falsifiable by any item of experience. This would be manifestly true in the case of those theories which claim to be free of ontology, if the claim were granted. But even if it were not, even if it is true, as I am suggesting in this paper it is, that all philoso-

philical theories are rooted in ontological commitments, we would still have to say that philosophical theories, unlike scientific theories, are, if acceptable, to be taken as true, whatever is the case, i. e. whatever our normal experience shows us to be the case. We cannot from a philosophical theory derive a test that will tell us normal experience, in order that the theory may be shown to be false. This is recognised by contemporary empiricists who go on to draw from this characteristic philosophical thinking the conclusion that all ontological statements are tautologous, since, like mathematical statements, they are said to be true, whatever is the case. They draw this conclusion, with the help of a parable,<sup>1</sup> in accordance with their own logic or pattern of thinking, which itself is determined by an ontological commitment though, of a negative kind. The proper conclusion to be drawn is that philosophical statements are not scientific statements; they have a different significance and a logic of their own. It is strange that those are prepared to go to the extreme of saying that every sentence has its own logic should indiscriminately apply the test, valid for scientific theories, to theories which *prima facie* at least, are of a different genre. The force of the empiricists' objection to metaphysics consists merely in showing that metaphysics, to be possible, must be metaphysics and that, to adopt the words of Kant, metaphysics as a natural science is not possible.

In drawing a clear distinction between philosophical and scientific reasoning, we are left with no alternative but to recognise that philosophical reasoning is *a priori*. This is the point which the empiricist philosophers do not seem to have realised. It is the mark of an *a priori* proposition that it is neither verifiable nor falsifiable in experience, and that is what we find philosophical theories to be. A philosophy may seek to purge itself of all ontology but if it claims to be anything more than formal, logic or methodology, it cannot give an account of its ways of reasoning consistently with the basic dogma of empiricism.

If philosophy is regarded as something more than formal logic and methodology, then the only possibility of denying the *a priori* character of philosophical reasoning lies in showing that philosophical

<sup>1</sup> The parable of the invisible gardener

statements, about whatsoever they are concerned with, are non-controversial. It is not surprising that the logic of this process of de-ontologising philosophical theories must drive philosophy into the arms of "Ordinary Language", for, where else can philosophy take refuge if it is to leave all factual proposition to science and yet maintain its distinctive character? But this refuge is no more than a subterfuge. Philosophy, in concerning itself with language, must distinguish itself from grammar and philology. And this it can only do by attaching a certain value to 'Ordinary Language' which has bearing on theory. It may be used for therapeutic purposes, or as a fresh starting point for a return to an ontology of, it is hoped, an unexceptional kind. Philosophy would then be descriptive metaphysics, laying bare the categorical structure of the world as presupposed in Ordinary Language.

The dream of propounding a non-controversial philosophy has always haunted philosophers through the ages, but it has always turned out to be and will ever remain a delusion. The therapeutic use which empiricists make of philosophy clearly presupposes the validity of empiricist premises, which themselves cannot be descriptive metaphysics, not only begs the question by denying the possibility of revisionary and transcendent metaphysics, but fails totally, in the sense that in the attempt to carry it out the distinction between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics, never very clear to start with, becomes completely blurred.

The recognition that philosophical reasoning is neither inductive nor aseptic in character, but derives its substance from what may be called an alogical act of commitment brings our enquiry back to the problem of first principles.

The consideration that shows the need for first principles is a familiar one. If philosophical reasoning is not to be circular, or if it is not to hang in the air, it must have an indubitable, or at least an unquestioned, starting point. All conclusions presuppose premises from which they are drawn, and these, if they themselves stand in need of justification, must depend on other premises, till we come to premises which are either self-evident or are accepted without further ado, because we have *decided* to treat them as being in a special case, as furnishing the point of orientation which will determine all further enquiry. The Idealists, like Bradley, would



say that reflection leads us back to the ultimate presuppositions of all thinking, which are to be accepted because they are inescapable necessities of thought. If we doubt them, thought falls into ruins and we are left with the ineluctable choice — "this or nothing".

Let us examine each of these views. On the first of these views, namely, that the first principles are self-evident, philosophical reasoning would be self-stultifying. These alleged self-evident truths can be no other than the laws of thought. Now the laws of thought are not concrete propositions about the world from which other propositions can be derived. They somehow clarify to us the most general conditions of intelligibility. A philosophy that takes them as the ultimate justification of all thought would not be able to take a step beyond its starting point. It would be totally barren.

The same considerations apply to the view that the ontological commitment of a considerations apply to the view in the confidence of thought in itself. This, of course, would be the minimum requirements of any rational enterprise. It is recognised explicitly in the *Mīmāṃsā svataḥ-prāmāṇya-vāda* and in Spinoza's maxim, *verum index sui et falsi*. But a mere confidence in the faculty of reason cannot by itself enable us to reason in any direction whatsoever, or, what amounts to the same thing, it will be equally present whatever form our actual thinking takes and thus will be of no use either in determining a system or in deciding whether it is true. Like the acceptance of the laws of thought, a mere confidence in the power of reason, is, from the point of view of actual philosophing, totally barren.

Nor is it enough to say that our basic commitments may consist in the recognition of the categorial structure of our thinking. The theory of the categories is as much a centre of philosophical dispute as any other problem. Even if a list of categories is agreed upon by most philosophers there will still be the problem of giving a satisfactory interpretation of these categories, of determining their importance and limitation and the kind of knowledge, if any, that we can get through them of the nature of the world. The divergent solutions of these troublesome questions will, each of them, presuppose an ontological commitment. The 'solutions' will merely be different ways in which different basic commitments come to be explicitly formulated in the situation created by the problem of the categories.

In a general way one may say that the starting point of philosophy consists in the various aspects of human experience. But these experiences do not reveal their meaning to a simple inspection, nor are their deliverances, if any, sacrosanct to the philosopher who has to think about them in a critical spirit and the way in which he organizes this mass of experience into a coherent system will depend on the point of orientation and not on the mere givenness of experience. The roots and motives of our thinking lie much deeper than they appear to be at the pre-critical level of thought.

The second view may be called the decision theory. It would be easy to criticise this theory on the grounds that it makes philosophical reasoning purely arbitrary and puts a stop to all enquiry beyond the limits of the system which is defined in terms of the initial decision. Further, it cannot rule out the possibility of alternative decisions originating alternative systems of thought leaving us with no criterion for deciding between these different and incompatible systems.

This is a line of criticism, however, which I do not, and in view of my own account of philosophical reasoning, cannot consistently adopt. The argument is specious, but it derives its force from the almost universal tendency to construct and interpret philosophical reasoning on the model of mathematics. The view that philosophy has need of first principles is made plausible only if we take mathematics as providing the paradigm of all reasoning outside the natural sciences. The decision theory contains an important element of truth and its consequence that it leaves open the possibility of constructing alternative systems is not necessarily to be condemned as preposterous. Indeed this theory explains more satisfactorily than its two rival *theories the existing state of affairs in philosophy, where, after over two thousand years of philosophising, agreement amongst philosophers remains as remote an ideal as it ever was before.* My criticism of the Decision Theory is that it is just as much under the influence of the false model for philosophical reasoning, i. e. it accepts the inevitable need for first principles, and since it does not accept a priori reasoning, it can only reach them by making them a matter of decision. Consequently it cannot show the organic connexion that must exist between one's starting point and the system to which it subsequently gives rise, nor can it do justice to the demand that is perhaps the distinctive characteristic of philosophical reasoning,

that, a philosophical system must be categorical. It cannot be conditional, much less, arbitrary, and cannot be put forward on entirely a "take it or leave it" basis, but must be self-contained in the sense that its starting point, though not logically necessary, is yet not arbitrary, but in some way reveals its own justification.

As regards the Idealist's view of first principles, I think the evidence against it is both on empirical and logical grounds. If something is an inescapable postulate of thought, it should be a matter for great surprise that so many of the world's great thinkers should have found it so easy to escape it, not to mention the fact that some of them even find it unintelligible. The Idealist is suggesting, in effect, not only that the idealist alone is right—we may grant him the right to say this—but also that none but the idealist is a clear-headed thinker, for he alone perceives the ineluctable presuppositions of all thinking. I do not think we can seriously suggest that the Absolute is pre-supposed in my perception of the table, or even in scientific knowledge, in the same way in which a premise and conclusion of a syllogism presuppose the other premise. The Idealist argument is the familiar Kantian argument carried beyond the limits of immanent metaphysics. It may be possible to show that certain categorical features of our experience are to be regarded as objective, since they are the conditions of the possibility of experience. But transcendental deduction, by its very nature, cannot go beyond the limits of that experience the conditions of the possibility of which it claims to determine. Kant was, I think, mistaken in saying that the categories are inapplicable beyond phenomena, i. e. our normal experience, on the ground that the noumenal is a thing-in-itself. His view would have been more intelligible and perfectly consistent if he had said that our thought about the noumenal cannot be shown to be a condition of the possibility of phenomenal experience, that it is thinking of a different kind and hence the features which are inseparable from phenomenal existence do not necessarily condition noumenal existence. Whether they do or do not has to be determined by fresh thinking and not by the methods of transcendental deduction.\*

---

\* Kant, as we know, reinstated through practical reasoning what he denied from the standpoint of theoretical reason, but in so far as he rejected the claims of the conclusions of practical reason to extend our *knowledge* of things, the criticism I have stated above is not affected.



This criticism, I believe, is confirmed, if we examine carefully the nerve of the Idealist dialectic. The Absolute is not really a conclusion that emerges by logical necessity at the end of a chain of reasoning. It is there at the very start, shaping and giving direction to the argument. It provides the criterion in the light of which error is distinguished from truth and appearance from reality.

Idealism is another example of a philosophy that harbours a mistaken notion of priorities, a philosophy that seeks to determine or demolish ontology through logic, thus, reversing the true order in accordance with which it is the dialectic which is determined by the ontological commitment and not conversely. Generally speaking we may say that those philosophies that fail to recognise the alogical character of the so-called first principles of reasoning must claim to rely in their argument exclusively on the principles of consistency and contradiction. Now consistency may be understood in two ways, either as a purely formal principle, or, more concretely, as a principle inseparable from the matter of reasoning. Used as an abstract principle, consistency can no more give us a philosophical or any other system than the laws of thought. If it does not confine itself to bare tautologies, it could at best make possible the deduction of conclusions from premises; but the premises themselves could not be obtained from the principle of consistency; they would have to come elsewhere. Consistency used as a concrete principle gives us, I think, a method which is compatible with the true method of philosophical reasoning, but then it necessarily presupposes a point of view. Consistent thinking would then not be a form of deductive reasoning, such as we find in mathematics, where consequences are drawn from axioms and definition, and where the whole process, however far continued, into whatever complicated channels, leaves the starting point untouched and undeveloped. Consistent thinking such as takes place in philosophy is a slow, painful and extremely difficult process of organising, developing and maturing a point of view, or a whole outlook, which is already there and which the process may be said to bring to birth only if we grant it a kind of prenatal existence. Thinking in philosophy is a process of self-exploration and self-discovery, a process in which, as Collingwood says, we come to know better and better what we always knew, or rather, what we always claimed to know. And this process is perhaps endless. We may

---

recall that it took British empiricism over two centuries to discover its soul, and even now, as John Anderson points out, it has not rid itself of inconsistency since it continues to make the unempirical distinction between sense and reason and betrays the hold of rationalism when it seeks to give an ultimate explanation and justification of our knowledge of the world in terms of sense data or atomic facts.

In the case of Bradley, for example, it should be obvious that what his dialectic actually accomplishes is not what he claims it does, namely that thought, from whatsoever it starts, is necessarily driven to the Absolute. What the dialectic does is to mature and give a rational form to a point of view which it presupposes and which expresses itself in the conviction that thought, voicing the deepest human aspirations, can rest nowhere, except in the baffled contemplation of the Absolute.

It is to be regretted that Mathematics has cast such a long and deep shadow over the whole province of philosophy. The attempt to understand philosophy as a distinctive activity and not either as a super-science of the supersensible, or as a mere extension or hand-maid of science, is long overdue. If at all philosophy has any useful lessons to draw from science, it should with greater profit turn to biology rather than to physics or mathematics.

Philosophical reasoning, however, can very usefully be compared with the process of artistic creation. Philosophy, like art, is expression, though in a different medium. In Poetry, for instance, there is, to begin with, a vague poetic idea which finds expression in the completed poem. The idea in embryo is what the poet is trying to express, but he himself does not know what he wants to express till he has expressed it. There is an organic unity running through the whole process and what comes at the end was not contained in the beginning in the same way in which the properties of a triangle are contained in the triangle.

We may compare the embryonic idea which inspires poetic creation with the ontological commitment of the philosopher and the completed poem with the developed logical system. Like the poet, the philosopher does not know his starting point, i. e. what he is committed to, till he expresses his basic point of view in a full fledged system. Both art and philosophy are forms of self-discovery or self-knowledge.



Philosophy, however, differs from art in that it is a cognitive activity, a way of knowing and not merely a form of self-expression.<sup>1</sup> We can meaningfully ask of a philosophical theory, as we cannot of a work of art, whether it is true. Now it is apparent that if we can ask of something whether it is true we can also significantly ask how do we know that it is true? To ask such a question of a philosophical theory is once again to raise the problem of first principles.

We are now left with the task of showing how a system can be self-sustaining without either being logically grounded or resting on an arbitrary decision. A philosophical system has no substructure of logic. Whatever logic it has must be interior and not anterior to it. We need an account of philosophical reasoning that will do justice to the almost universal belief that philosophical thinking is categorical, that in philosophy we think without assumptions, a characteristic, we may say, which defines philosophical reasoning and distinguishes it from scientific reasoning. At the same time we must not, in philosophy, look for what are called 'knock-down' arguments of the 'this or nothing' type. "Proof and disproof's" says Waismann "are dying words in philosophy." They would be better dead. Philosophical propositions are neither certain nor probable, neither necessary nor contingent. These terms and their distinctions belong to the logic of mathematics and science, but are inapplicable to the logic of philosophical reasoning.

We have to show that philosophical reasoning is neither arbitrary nor logically grounded, and yet self-sustaining and self-justifying. To do this we have to give up the search for first principles and ask instead, what is the criterion in accordance with which the reasoning operates, for a criterion there must be in all reasoning. To think is to judge, that is to say, to evaluate, and evaluation presupposes a standard.

Now it should be noted that since all reasoning operates with a criterion the latter cannot be driven by a process of reasoning. For the same reason, it cannot be questioned or subjected to a logical cross-examination, not, it should be noted, because to doubt it would

---

1 Through art, the artist may come to know himself or an aspect of himself, but the artistic product is not itself cognitive, i. e. it is not qua work of art, intended to give us knowledge of things.

be to fall into self-contradiction. The statement that thinking needs no criterion may be a self-contradiction, or at any rate, unintelligible but I am concerned with the situation in which there are alternative criteria and correspondingly alternative philosophical systems. Criteria cannot be questioned, not because they are indubitable, but because it makes no sense to talk of questioning them. The question, "how shall we judge the validity of a criterion?" is, to use the words of Descartes, "une question mal posee". To explain: a particular criterion, say A, cannot be questioned within the system which it determines, for, all questioning within that system is in accordance with the criterion. It cannot be questioned within an alternative system either for, that system itself operates with the criterion of its own, say B, which could equally be questioned in the system governed by the Criterion A. But then each of the two questionings would be circular. In actual fact the two criteria, A and B, are incommensurable and there can be no *logical* *nisus* in either towards the other.

This naturally raises the question of the truth-value of the systems determined by the alternative criteria. On this view, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to choose between them, since to choose is to think and it is not possible to think along neutral channels, in accordance with the bare principle of consistency. The choice will itself reflect a point of view and involve the use of a criterion, so that, inspite of a show of reasoning, we shall finally choose that which we have already chosen.

I do not think, however, that we can rest content with the recognition that there are alternative systems of truth, and I do not think that the view outlined above is necessarily committed to it. We have to ask, in what sense the two systems, each operating with its own criterion, can be said to be alternatives. The term "alternatives" is ambiguous. It may mean two different and equally good ways of doing a thing or solving a problem or it may mean two incompatible ways of doing a thing or solving a problem. The two criteria A and B are not alternatives in the first sense, and the second sense needs analysis. In this sense the systems are alternatives only if they join issue on any point, otherwise they cannot come into conflict with each other. Do the two systems join issue at all? We may notice first that the two systems do not give two different and

incompatible answers to the same question. It is the characteristic of philosophical thinking that no philosophical statement can be made that is wholly non-aligned. We cannot even have a neutral and impersonal definition of philosophy. Further, and perhaps this point has not been sufficiently recognised, we cannot ask questions in philosophy, i. e. cannot formulate *explicitly* what our questions are, without presupposing a theory. This is because to formulate a question is to take the first step in the process of exploring and maturing the basic point of view which underlies the enquiry. Hence, though the question asked in the two systems may be verbally the same, their content will differ and each will be coloured by the system in which it is raised and answered. The question, as it were, spearheads the movements of enquiry and the system which emerges in its totality is the answer to the question, but both the question and the answer are inseparable parts of a single system.

It would seem that we have two or perhaps more monadic systems, in neither of which there is a window from which one can look out on the the other, thus shutting out all possibility of a controversy or even a dialogue between the two. But this cannot be the last word on the subject. The account which I shall now give of the relation and final unification of the apparently monadic systems will be from the metaphysical point of view. This is because I am that *rara avis*, a metaphysician, and not ashamed to confess it, though I do not have much in common with traditional metaphysics.

There are, according to me, broadly, two criteria or points of view, one metaphysical and the other which calls itself anti-metaphysical, though, if it is to avoid logical contradiction, it should more properly be called non-metaphysical. Both the criteria spring from the ontological commitments, which are at the origin of the respective systems. The former, the metaphysical criterion, explicitly determines an ontological system, the latter, the empiricists' criterion, attempts to give an account of experience by prompting from all metaphysical, and in some cases, all ontological considerations. Now, I would like to suggest that the two criteria are logically incommensurable, only if we confine our attention to the logical systems in which they are formulated, that is, if we raise the question of consistency. They are, however, not absolutely incommensurable. There is a difference of kind in the two criteria, for, one is positive,



and the other is negative. The one is metaphysical and the other cannot be described except negatively, i. e., as non-metaphysical. The difference in kind points to a difference in levels. The metaphysical point of view justifies itself in a way in which the empiricist point of view cannot. It has a window from which it can look out on the lower point of view. Hence the former can explain and evaluate the latter, but the reverse is not true. The empiricist point of view is monadic; there is no logical passage from empiricism to metaphysics, since empiricism rests on and is sustained by no other foundation than a denial of or withdrawal from metaphysics. This difference may be expressed by saying that metaphysics alone is philosophy in the proper sense of the word, since it is capable of giving a positive account of itself. Empiricism is at best philosophy in the aesthetic attitude. It shows how one is to see or understand experience on condition that one remains blind to the metaphysical foundation of the universe. It is a kind of thinking with blinkers on. There is only one condition on which empiricism can be as positive as metaphysics claims to be, if it can show that metaphysics can be eliminated on purely logical grounds—But I believe the empiricist themselves now recognise that they are not able to do this, though, perhaps, they do not admit that the very attempt to eliminate metaphysics on logical grounds is self-contradictory. I will conclude by showing how the metaphysical criterion is positive, and to that extent self-justifying.

The ontological commitment underlying a metaphysical system is belief in God, understood as the Perfect Being. God need not, for the purpose of this argument, be understood, as a Person or a Creator. The idea of God is basic to Metaphysics. It determines the distinctive character of metaphysical reasoning. This point requires elucidation. It can be properly understood only in the context of what I have said concerning the nature of reasoning in philosophy.

The remark that the idea of God is basic to metaphysics might appear strange in view of the fact that there exist materialistic, atheistic and agnostic schools of metaphysics. But it should be clear that the account which I am giving of metaphysical reasoning is not meant to be a historical one. It is the result of reflective analysis. Materialism (and what I say of Materialism applies equally to all systems

---

of so-called metaphysics which do not make the idea of God the central theme and the 'guiding gnosis' of the entire system) belongs to the pre-critical level of thought. It is a negative creed which has not made clear to itself what its ontological commitment is and how it will set about reasoning out its conclusions. It also uncritically assumes that philosophy is a way of proving and disproving propositions. Is the materialist, prior to all reasoning, committed to the view that God does not exist? If so the existence of God is not disproved and materialism begs the question. If not, how will the materialist reason to show that God does not exist? What is the guiding gnosis that can be elaborated into an atheistic metaphysical system? I have shown that mere consistent thinking is barren and cannot lead to the construction of a system; and though the fact of evil undoubtedly poses a serious problem to the theist, the argument from the fact of evil to the non-existence of God is entirely inconclusive. A metaphysical demonstration of the non-existence (or, for that matter, the existence) of God is not possible. A more consistent position would be to hold that Metaphysical propositions have no cognitive meaning, from which it would follow, not that God does not exist, but that all talk about the existence or non-existence of God is meaningless.

Materialism is only a half-way house to positivism, which, as I have said, is philosophy in the aesthetic attitude, i. e. a philosophy that says in effect: Let us see what the world looks like when we have not only banished God from it but even the idea of God from our minds. As it is merely the working out of a 'programme' we cannot say of positivism that it is true or false, but only that it is, or can be very ingenious.

There are three things that can be said of this idea of God which is the basic idea of all metaphysics. 1. It is a non-anthropomorphic, i. e. a metaphysical idea; 2. We either have it or do not have it. It cannot be logically excogitated, nor can it be clarified or its meaning determined except in metaphysical terms, which are only its synonyms. The idea of God is neither derived from experience, nor is it an a priori in the Kantian sense, i. e. it cannot be brought to explicit self-consciousness through the help of sense-experience; and 3. the question how the (strictly metaphysical) idea of God arises in the mind, though an interesting question in itself, is not relevant for the

purpose of analysing the nature of metaphysical reasoning. Whatever answer we give to the question ; How is the idea of God possible? one thing I know namely, that I have this idea and that it is my metaphysical commitment, the guiding gnosis of metaphysical reasoning.

Let me now make clear how the idea of God determines the course of metaphysical thinking. The idea of God is a unique idea. Many thinkers have recognized this, but they have not understood in what the uniqueness consists. It is unique because it is the only positive idea which gives us a criterion in the light of which our thinking is directed. It functions as the norm of all ( metaphysical ) thought. By definition ( not nominal ) God is the Perfect Being, the Self-existent, that which explains all things and is itself self luminous, that reaching which no further questions arise. By contrast, everything else is fragmentary and necessarily carried thought beyond itself to that all-embracing Whole. Clearly, such an idea, by a force inherent in it, opens out into a metaphysical system. *To have this idea is to think in terms of this idea.* All metaphysical thinking is necessarily God-oriented.

It would seem that in the above statements I have arrived at the same conclusion as the Ontological Argument, namely that to have a genuine idea of God is inconsistent with denying the existence of God. My way of thinking does not, however, coincide with the Ontological Argument. This is too big a subject to be tackled here. I would like to make only one point in this connection. Thinking concretely is thinking under the guidance of an alogical notion and consists largely in maturing this notion into a self-consistent system. 'God' is the guiding notion of metaphysical thinking, but the truth of this guiding notion cannot be proved by the metaphysician, because the only concrete direction which metaphysical thinking can take is towards a consistent system which is in accordance, not merely with the laws of thought, but with the idea of God itself. Hence all arguments to prove God's existence ( or the existence of anything, or the truth of any proposition in Philosophy ) are futile, not because they fail of their purpose, but because they entirely fail to understand the nature of philosophical reasoning. Thus, in philosophy the metaphysical system alone is self-sustaining. The account it gives of itself is rounded off leaving no loose ends, and exhibiting



no ragged edges. It is, as philosophy, internally coherent and self-justifying.

Finally, we may point out that though the whole metaphysical system hangs together, we cannot get rid of the feeling that the system as a whole hangs in the air. This, however, far from being a defect, is precisely what one should expect a philosophical system to be. The metaphysical system is as self-sustaining as any philosophical system can be, but the question is whether philosophy itself, as an affair of intellect, as moving in the domain of truth and meaning, can be sufficient unto itself or can hold its *raison d'être* within itself. To one who has occupied the metaphysical point of view, philosophy may appear, not as a closed system, but as a transitional stage in a wider process whose fulfilment takes us beyond philosophy. In philosophy, as metaphysics, there is a felt *nisus* towards the metaphilosophical. The metaphysical system is, we may say, intellectually incorrigible, but the intellect as such is itself corrigible in the sense that it has to be transcended and fulfilled in a supra-rational experience. The whole of metaphysics, though it is a cognitive activity, and expresses itself in a rational form, really lives by an act of faith or an ontological commitment. It is not itself knowledge, but only the promise of knowledge. It is merely a formulation and translation in intellectual terms of a possible mode of direct realisation. Since the roots of our being are in the Transcendent, i. e. the metaphysical Reality, it is natural that the creations of our mind, including the products of reason, should carry within them a *nisus* towards the supra-rational and the Transcendent. If it did not, philosophy would become the supreme barrier between man and God, like the golden cloud spread across the face of Truth, and so shut out all possibility of a dramatic meeting with God, an immortal longing and a supernatural destiny. I do not suppose there is any such thing as blasphemy, but if in some mild sense there is, I have often felt that it is a blasphemy, not to deny the existence of God, but to assert that the existence of God can be rationally demonstrated.

## MY CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

R. DAS

In trying to explain what I understand by philosophy, my first problem is how to distinguish it from science, for both science and philosophy are supposed to be concerned with giving us knowledge. Now, if knowledge is always knowledge of reality and if reality is one and the same for all, then the knowledge of it should also be one and the same. *Prima facie*, by knowledge we mean the correct representation of reality as it is, in our idea. If both science and philosophy give us knowledge of reality then we should get the same idea from both, and science and philosophy should coincide with one another and should be just one thing and not two things.

It is true that, for some people, real philosophy appears to be just science, still it is not the view of all scientists or philosophers, for whom science and philosophy stand for two distinct disciplines, and we have the task of distinguishing philosophy from science. People try to distinguish them in various ways. Some think that philosophy gives us knowledge of reality as a whole, whereas different sciences give us knowledge only of parts of reality. It is obvious that we cannot know a whole unless we know its parts also, and so, if the above view of science and philosophy be correct, then we should know the sciences before we come to philosophy. This would make philosophy fairly impossible. It is not possible for one man, in the present state of scientific development, to master even one science completely. How will it be possible for a man to learn all the sciences before he becomes a philosopher?

Some people think that although both science and philosophy give us knowledge of reality, they differ in their methods of study. Science tries to ascertain the nature of reality by observation and experiment, while philosophy tries to do the same thing by means of pure rational thinking. That is to say, ultimately sense experience is the principal means of knowledge for science, whereas philosophy relies solely on pure rational thinking. But is it really possible to study the same reality by either means? Can we make what is to be grasped by pure thought alone an object of sense experience? Conversely, can we reach by mere thought what is available to sensible intuition? It seems clear that what is given by sense can never be reached by mere thought, and so, if the above description



of scientific and philosophical studies be correct, science and philosophy cannot be said to study the same reality.

It may be said that they study the different aspects of the same reality. But how is it to be decided that they are the different aspects of the same reality? Moreover, the philosophers aim at knowing the whole of reality. They even say that it is their business to know reality, while the scientists know at best only appearances. The scientists retort by saying that while they try to give us real knowledge, the philosophers are content with mere imaginative speculations. The undecided controversy between empiricism and rationalism will raise its head here, and we cannot enter the controversy with any hope of profit for our present purpose.

At any rate, it is quite clear that what we get from science, we can never hope to get from pure philosophy. The prestige of science is, now-a-days, quite enormous and we cannot doubt that what we get from science is not knowledge, and if knowledge is what we get from science, then surely what philosophy claims to give, or aims at giving, is not real knowledge but something else, no matter whatever name you may choose to give to it. Even a great philosopher like Kant conceded that it is science which is competent to give us knowledge. In fact he understood by knowledge only scientific knowledge, in which sense experience had an indispensable share. But it is quite notorious that philosophers dispense with such experience in philosophic studies. While the scientists tend to characterise the results of philosophical thinking as merely speculative in a bad sense, the philosophers are apt to condemn the results of scientific thinking as merely provisional and hypothetical, and never quite certain, being always open to correction. It is the aim of the philosophers to give us truth which is absolutely certain. But have they ever fulfilled, or can they ever hope to fulfil, this aim? However it is no part of our present purpose to settle the dispute between science and philosophy. Our principal objective is to get a clear idea of what exactly the philosophers do when they philosophise, and, as a step towards the fulfilment of that object, to distinguish philosophy from science. It is, I think, fairly evident that philosophy does not give us the kind of knowledge which science provides, and if by knowledge one chooses to understand the kind of knowledge we get from science, then one may go so far as to say that philosophy does not give us knowledge at all.

But, of course, it is not necessary to confine the application of the term knowledge to scientific knowledge only. We get knowledge from history as well as from science. Our historical knowledge is no less important than scientific knowledge. Then, we come to know each other through personal intercourse and the sort of knowledge we thereby obtain, cannot be provided by science. Above all, we cannot overlook the obvious limitation of scientific knowledge that it is concerned merely with the object and the subject is ignored for all practical purposes. The subject for science, is, at best, a mere ghostly spectator. But for purposes of knowledge, the subject is as important as the object and it can never be maintained that the subjective is no fact of knowledge. I know that I am and the certainty of this knowledge cannot be approached by any objective knowledge. The object comes to us as an other, about which it is always meaningful to ask whether it is there and in this sense objective knowledge is always doubtful. But I can never significantly ask whether I am there, for my own existence is always presupposed by any act of questioning on my part. For philosophy the subject is at least as important as the object, in fact, it is more important than the object. Whereas for science the object is the sole concern, in philosophy the object of course cannot be ignored but it takes a subordinate place. While in science we know the object merely, in philosophy we try to know the object as to a subject. It is not the mere object, but the object as known that is the concern of philosophy. A mere object in itself, for ought we know, may ultimately be unknown and unknowable. But for philosophy an unknown and unknowable object would be no object at all. To be a real object, it must sustain some intelligible relationship with the subject. I suppose this subjective bias is enough to distinguish philosophical knowledge from scientific knowledge.

Scientific knowledge may indeed satisfy our curiosity or love of knowledge for its own sake. But philosophical knowledge is supposed to satisfy some deep seated spiritual need of our soul. A Vedic sage, female though she was, spurned the offer of earthly treasures, because they could not bring her immortality, and, I imagine, she would have spurned with equal scorn all mere scientific knowledge of the world which did not serve any higher purpose than the satisfaction of mere curiosity. The Indian tradition is that one entered on a philosophical

quest in order to remove some spiritual *malaise* or disquiet of one's soul. Nobody would undertake the arduous task of earnest and serious philosophical thinking unless it was meant to satisfy some serious concern of his mind or soul.

People have sometimes asserted that the problem of reality is the problem of what makes us feel most concerned. If, there is anything about which we feel no concern whatever, it can hardly be called real at all. This subjective overtone distinguishes, in my opinion, a philosophical object from a scientific object. A truly scientific object suffers from no subjective taint and is supposed to exist in itself apart from any necessary relation to a conscious subject. Scientific knowledge aims at giving us knowledge of such a pure object. To science therefore philosophical knowledge does not appear to be real knowledge at all, which should disclose the nature of mere object in its purity. Philosophical knowledge no doubt gives us an object, but an object that is subjectively coloured and, therefore, to some extent, as a scientist would say, false. But if to a scientist, the philosophical object is partly subjective, to a philosopher, the scientific object is unduly abstract. And if reality is concrete, the abstract scientific object cannot be freed from the charge of an amount of unreality. A philosopher thus finds the object, given by science, to be abstract and hypothetical, falling far short of concrete reality.

It cannot be denied that whatever object we ever come to know is always found to be in some subjective setting. An object is an object always for a subject. Apart from all relations to a subject, an object would be a mere thing in itself which is unknown and unknowable.

We have just said that an object is always for a subject, and the phrase 'for a subject' does not mean merely 'known by a subject'. Just as the object is to be understood in its concrete real character, the subject too has to be similarly understood in its concrete character. A subject, thus understood, is not a mere indifferent witness, whose function is knowing only, apart from feeling and willing. Psychologists tell us that such a subject is an abstraction. The real subject is knowing, feeling and willing at the same time. In the subjective apprehension of an object, the elements of emotion and volition inevitably enter along with knowing. We are variously interested in the object and all our interests cast their shadows on the object



and determine its concrete appearance. In a sense, all our interests go into the making of the object, which is to be an object for us.

The object of knowledge being thus vitally connected with our interests, to know the object philosophically, is also to gain, however indirectly, some knowledge about the subject also. All philosophical knowledge thus, even though not consciously and deliberately directed towards the self, is bound to contribute to our self knowledge. This pivotal point of self-knowledge seems, in my view, to be the most important aspect of philosophical knowledge, so much so that a demand for philosophical knowledge may well be equated with a demand for self-knowledge and *vice versa*. So when the Upanishadic sage says '*ātmanam viddhi*' (know the self) and when the Greek philosopher says '*gnothe seauton*' (know thyself) we may well understand them to issue a call to all serious-minded people to philosophise.

It may not be at once clear how a demand for self-knowledge is to be understood as a demand to philosophise. Philosophy apparently is concerned with the knowledge of reality and reality consists of both self and not-self, and it is not at once obvious how a knowledge of the self may amount to a knowledge of the total reality. But a little reflection will show that self-knowledge cannot be divorced from the knowledge of reality, including both self and not self, both subject and object.

Some people no doubt think that in order to know the self, we must turn away from the world and the self may well be known in an act of intuition, exclusive of any philosophical thinking. If they were right, then it would seem that self-knowledge might not at all be an affair of philosophy. But I am convinced that such a view of the self, as quite distinct from and wholly opposed to the world, is quite unrealistic. Just as the object, as we have seen, cannot be understood apart from the subject, the subject too is nowhere found apart from the object. Both subject and object are given as inseparable correlates, so that each is unreal apart from the other. If we go in search of the pure ego, out of all relations with the world, we have to come back empty-handed or sink into mysticism. We have held that the subject or self casts its shadow over the object and ultimately it is not difficult to see that the self has spread itself over the whole

world, so that to know the self fully is really to know the whole world in its principal dominant aspects, corresponding to the principal vital interests of the self. If we shut out the world totally from within the compass of self-knowledge, we shall find that it has ceased to be knowledge at all and has passed into total ignorance or utter emptiness.

I know that for some people this kind of objectless knowledge is the very perfection of knowledge; but I believe they are already committed to some form of mysticism. For me knowledge must always have its proper object and in self-knowledge also, although the self itself is not turned into an object, there must be some object and the self will be there as a correlative of the object. The centre of our attention may be the self, not as object but as subject, but there must be some object also as an indispensable correlate of the subject. For me, then, both subject in itself and object in itself, apart from each other, are unreal abstractions and we cannot philosophically treat either apart from the other.

For philosophy, of course, the self is central, even though we may never begin with it. Any act of knowledge starts with the object and never leaves it behind, but on reflection it is found that the subject or the self is already presupposed. Philosophical knowledge, which is *par excellence* reflective, is mostly concerned with bringing out the presuppositions of our objective knowledge.

Fortunately we do not have to begin philosophising *in vacuo*. We are all of us born into some philosophy, i. e. in some society with a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere, with predetermined beliefs and attitudes, provided by what is generally called commonsense. Commonsense represents a rough and ready kind of philosophy, which all of us share to start with. It is called a philosophy in the sense that it represents a view of the universe in which we live, move and have our being, embodying some definite belief about things, by which we are surrounded and also about ourselves. These views and beliefs constitute for men of commonsense their *prima facie* knowledge of reality, in the light of which their life and conduct is guided and so in this sense they may be said to make up their philosophy. Just as we inherit and speak the language of our parents and neighbours, so we think and speak in the terms of the common sense philosophy which determines their thought, speech and beliefs. Thus

common sense which we share with our untutored neighbours is the starting point for our further philosophical efforts.

People sometimes say that we must begin with our experience. But it is difficult to get to radical experience with naked absolute data. Our so-called experience is already charged with common sense beliefs. There is no uninterpreted experience for us to start with. All our experience, with which we can properly deal, is already interpreted experience in terms of common sense beliefs. So, roughly speaking, we may say that we have to begin with common sense.

Now, as working philosophy, common sense suffices for the vast majority of mankind. But for some critical minds, given to reflection, common sense beliefs appear at many points unclear and contradictory and so they cannot remain content with them. There is an inherent demand in the human soul for clarity and coherence, and in response to this demand, these people of reflective turn of mind, engage themselves in serious thinking to find better substitutes for the unsatisfactory common sense beliefs. These are our philosophers. Their task is to formulate a more consistent and clearer view of human life and the world than what is provided by unreflective common sense. In fact, they have a two-fold task—one critical and the other constructive. They have, first, to bring to light the unclear points and lacunae in common sense thinking and secondly, to construct by speculative thinking a self-consistent view of the universe, in which we live, that will be free from the incoherence and obscurity of common sense. Nearly all the major philosophers of the world have given us, in their systems of thought, their views of reality as they saw it. They embody their understanding of reality in conceptual terms which can be followed by ordinary understanding. Mystics too have their visions and experiences of truth and reality, but they are never expressed, nor are they expressible, in conceptual terms which can be logically followed by ordinary understanding and hence what they offer us is not philosophy. Mysticism is distinguished both from common sense and philosophy by its patently paradoxical and alogical character.

Now, it is not every philosopher who succeeds in coming to a definite understanding of reality, which can be presented in a well-articulated system. There may be some who find reality too vast



and complicated to be comprehensible by human intelligence. There are sceptics and agnostics who too are reckoned as philosophers. Although they do not construct any positive system they throw much light on many important aspects of our experience by their searching criticism. It is thus clear that philosophers, as such, do not promise to give us any positive knowledge of reality. It is enough if they can clarify some of our obscure ideas about important matters. Even those who have given us elaborate systems of thought cannot claim to have established any truth that is universally acceptable.

It is well to recognise that philosophy does not exist as a body of well-established truths that can be added to by other philosophers. And if by knowledge we understand information of some sort about objective facts, then we may say that philosophy does not give us any knowledge at all. It discovers no new facts. All the relevant facts to be considered by a philosopher are already there and we need not turn to a philosopher, as we may well turn to an historian or to a scientist for the knowledge of any new facts. We may learn from a philosopher what factuality means but certainly not what facts are there (understanding by fact any related complex of perceivable data).

All the relevant facts being already available to common sense as well as to philosophy, what we expect from philosophers is not the knowledge of any new facts, but their interpretation and appreciation of the facts already known to us. Such being the case, it is not at all surprising that philosophers always differ among themselves and disputes among them are unending. It is possible to arrive at a common understanding of objective facts, but our philosophies are not determined by objective facts alone, but also by our subjective stand-points, by the level of consciousness from which we view these facts. It is thus intelligible how there can be no final refutation of a system of philosophy, as there can be of a scientific theory. Scientific theories are refuted once for all and done away with. But it is not so with philosophies. A philosophy, thousand times refuted by its opponents, may again raise its head. The fact is that if a philosopher has genuinely perceived some truth, it lives, and is bound to live, as long as there are people who attain to a similar view and can appreciate it. This is why Plato and Aristotle still live and there are

followers of Nyaya and Vedanta, even among our contemporaries, although these systems are many centuries old and have been criticised and refuted by their opponents many times over.

If philosophy gives us no knowledge and is not a well established body of truths, growing or stagnant, what exactly, then, is philosophy? Philosophy, I believe, lives in the activity of philosophers. Indeed philosophy is philosophising. Philosophising, as the common practice of all philosophers, whether critical or constructive, analytic or synthetic, is essentially critical reflection, reflection on vital aspects of experience with a view to gaining relative clarity and rational satisfaction.

We may remember that we begin to philosophise from the level of common sense, implying a positive view of reality i. e. of ourselves and the world in which we live. Our critical reflection may serve to amend the positive view with which we started and leave us at the end with an amended view of reality which we find relatively satisfactory. Our critical reflection may raise us to a higher level of consciousness than is represented by common sense and give us a profounder view of reality which replaces the common sense view.

But critical reflection need not end with any positive view and may even find all such views untenable. This is the case with sceptics and agnostics. They do not uphold any positive view. But since life becomes impossible without some view of reality to guide it, some positive view will have to be held for all practical purposes; however it should be rather lightly held, so that it may be given up easily, as soon as a better view dawns upon us.

## CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

G. R. MALKANI

Philosophy is a special kind of theoretic activity. In general we might say that it aims at truth. But what truth? Science is a theoretic activity and it also aims at truth. To distinguish philosophy from science, some philosophers have provided a special subject-matter for philosophy. According to them, it must give us the knowledge of supersensible reality, such as God or soul or the Absolute Spirit, etc. This may or may not be possible. At least we have no intuition of any of these entities to begin with. If knowledge of the sort is to be possible, we must find the correct method to it. There may be a positive method, such as *sruti* or the revealed word, but this will not be acceptable to all. What is accepted by all is the method used by science.

Let us therefore begin with science, which is universally recognised to be a species of genuine and valid knowledge. Science is a study of matters of fact. It is true as far as it goes. But reflection upon it reveals its inadequacy and one-sidedness. It studies the object in isolation from the subject to which it is necessarily related. The subjective elements in knowledge are quite undeniable, and they undermine its truth-value. Science may become aware of them, but it can do nothing about them. It just ignores them. It persuades itself that it is in possession of truth all the same; and the claim is rarely challenged.

Philosophical reflection fixes upon the subjective elements; and with it begins a criticism of scientific knowledge. Kant showed this in his own way. We may or may not accept all that Kant said about the *a priori* principles and how they determine all our knowledge. But there is little doubt that all empirical knowledge is subjectively determined at various levels. To get our data, the knowledge is mediated by our senses, which are recognisably unreliable and corruptible. The second stage in subjectivity is reached when we *judge* what is said to be given. All judgement is conceptualisation or idealisation of the given. The real thing that is given thus retreats into the back-ground as something undetermined and undeterminable. It is the proverbial substance behind the qualities. A third stage is reached when we generalise or construct a hypothesis to explain what is sensibly known. Thus all our facts and the

---



interpretation of those facts are subjectively coloured or imagined. There is no such thing as knowledge of the *pure fact* or the thing as it is in itself.

Philosophical reflection, conscious of the deficiencies of scientific knowledge, naturally turns from a study of sensibly given objects to the study of the subject and its most important function of thought. If we study thought we get what is called logic. It may be formal logic, or inductive logic or metaphysical logic. The study of the pure form of thought is interesting in its own way. It gives us a kind of knowledge which has the stamp of finality about it. But it has its own objects. The *form* of thought is not the thing itself. It is merely the way the subject functions in knowing things. It would be too much to expect that we all can identify the two. By reality we understand something that is not a subjective function, but a kind of substance or thing that exists independently of every subjective function. So logic cannot fulfil our ideal of knowledge.

Philosophical reflection naturally goes ahead in pursuit of objective truth. A new level is reached when we become aware of something, claiming to be real but not subjectively determined. We here go beyond both science and logic. We become aware of what is called *thing-in-itself* by Kant and being (*Sat*) by Advaita Vedanta. We may perhaps call it the pure object or the object as truth. The pure object has no empirical determinations. It is the known object *minus* its empirical form, its empirical relations and its empirical content. It is the non-empirical and the transcendent. It is the Great; because it underlies every thing that we can know in the objective attitude. We can go beyond one object to another object. But how can we go beyond what underlies all objects? Here we get at something which has *no limitation* of any kind. It is limited neither by space, nor by time, nor by quality of any kind. It is the metaphysical ground of the empirical world. We may banish the metaphysical as a reality apart and as transcendent. But we cannot banish it as a reality that is immanent and pervasive as the universal ground of all things that are ever known. Indeed we cannot find it, if we scrutinize minutely what is objectively given. But then we are only looking for it in the wrong direction. It is not *just out there in space*, hiding behind what confronts us so looked at, it is

as good as nothing. It is simply indistinguishable from non-being. But looked at from different and a more discriminating point of view, its reality is not only undeniable, but it is the *higher* reality.

Everything that is empirically given can be negated; for it is subjectively determined. But when the empirical object is negated, everything is not negated. There can be no such thing as absolute negation in knowledge. Something real must be there that sustains the subjective appearance to us. That something cannot be negated or cancelled. It can have no empirical determinations itself, since these have already been transcended. It is necessarily trans-empirical and metaphysical. It is the only sort of *ultimate reality* or *necessary being* for which we have undeniable evidence in empirical knowledge itself.

This sort of reality deserves more thorough-going and serious study. We need to ask the question, is it a mere abstraction or a great truth? If it is the latter, we cannot rest satisfied by saying, as Kant did, that it is unknown and unknowable. It is already known in a way and known more truly than the empirical super-structure. Only our knowledge of it is not adequate. In the circumstances, we tend to put it *outside* as some kind of *transcendent object*. This involves a self-contradiction. To know its true and complete nature, we may have to look in some other direction. The Great, outside of which nothing can fall, cannot be *an object of some kind or other*.

This metaphysical reality, which has no empirical determinations, cannot be *physical*; for the physical is naturally known through sense perception. It cannot be *mental* either; for the mind and all that it stands for is known, either through introspection or through inference as an inner object or a series of such objects. It cannot be *thought* or *will* in their pure or transcendent form. We know no such form. Thought and will are empirical reality. It cannot be some kind of *neutral stuff*, which is neither intelligent nor non-intelligent. Such a conception is purely verbal like the horn of a hare. In experience itself, there is no *via media* between the *given* (i. e. the non-intelligent) and the *not-given* (i. e. the intelligent). This takes us to the true principles of intelligence in us or the *ultimate subject*, which is indicated by 'I' or 'the self'.

Here then is something that we know about being (Sat),

- (1) It is the great, so that space and time fall within it, it does not fall within them.
- (2) It can never be denied as the underlying and pervasive reality of the empirically known and knowable world.
- (3) It is essentially intelligent or spiritual in character,
- (4) Lastly, the known empirical world can only have one particular kind of relation to the underlying reality. It cannot form part of it. It cannot have a *real* or an *organic* relation to it likely to affect it in any way. It can only sit loosely and freely upon it, deriving substance from it but giving none. In brief it does not belong where it appears. It is illusory in that sense. This is the new dimension of knowledge suggested by an analysis of our experience.

*Metaphysics is nothing but a reflective elaboration of our common experience.* Those Philosophers therefore who are opposed to metaphysics are philosophers who just do not carry their reflection to a point where they can see a problem. They are philosophers without a philosophy. Nobody need join issue with them. They have neither a subject-matter nor a problem. They accept common sense statements at their face value and give some analysis of those statements. Such analysis is neither here nor there. It brings no enlightenment to any-one, least of all to themselves. They stay at the common-sense level and persuade themselves that there is *no problem of truth*.

We have tried to show that there is a metaphysical problem arising from our common experience. The problem throws up a further problem. The metaphysical reality is rather tantalising. It is somehow given and yet not knowable in the objective attitude. So we know it, and yet not know it at the same time. We are familiar only with one method of knowledge, and that is judgemental knowledge. Philosophers are not wanting who, taking their stand on judgemental knowledge, aver that the ultimate and absolute reality is the real subject of all our predication. The empirical propositions are thus to be referred to this subject as partial expressions of the whole truth. But how are we to know the whole truth, if no judgement is adequate to it? Have we a non-judgemental method of knowledge in which the predicate will not fall apart from the subject



and then externally united to it? A method sometimes offered is both vague and impossible. We must break with thought, it is suggested, we must have a kind of feeling above the level of thought. This feeling will somehow bring together all possible predicates into the unity of a non-discursive type of knowledge. We thus know reality as a unity, but it is diversified by the content of all possible experience.

This view does not take us anywhere. Feeling cannot take the place of thought. Knowledge is a matter of thought; and what thought needs for knowledge is not an abstract argument of doubtful merit, but a recognised methodology. May be, there is a super-sensible intuition of reality which needs to be elicited. May be, certain statements of the revealed scripture constitute reliable and important evidence of a higher truth. What is certain is that a feeling-type of intuition cannot pass off as knowledge. If we rely too much on feeling, we shall be the deputies of self-styled mystics who see nothing and seers who presume too much.

We have exhausted the objective side of knowledge in pure science. We have come up against the metaphysical object. We know quite something about it, but not enough. The metaphysical object or *being* (*Sat*) constitutes the positive core of all our knowledge. We know it if we know anything whatsoever. But for the rest, our knowledge of it is more or less negative. If it is the great, we do not know what sort of reality can be truly great. If it is not in space and time, if it is not given to us from the outside as object, if it has no limitation whatsoever, if it is not sensible, etc., how and where shall we know it? The only reality that is left to us within our experience after negation is the metaphysical or the transcendental subject. This is a reality which is supremely knowable or knowable in its full and complete nature.

The self is not given as object. But it is never denied. Nobody can meaningfully say, "I am not." I may be anything, but surely *I am*. Again, no discriminating person can say, "I am *this*, *that* or the *other thing*." May be, our intuition of 'I' is a mixed one, in which I is confused with this in some manner or other. We confuse the self with the body and its characters or with the mind and its characteristics. But thought can find no difficulty in resolving this confusion and distinguishing the not-I from the I. More than that. Thought

can obtain a revelation of the true nature of spiritual reality through this distinction itself. The self is like nothing else that we know. It is partless, formless, qualityless, contentless, infinite, etc. Everywhere else thought *informs* and *determines* what it knows through its categories and concepts. The result is that it lacks the true revelation of reality. In the case of the I or the self it is just the other way. The self *reveals* itself to thought and *informs* thought. It reveals itself as above all categories and above all concepts. It is like nothing else. It accepts no determination and no pattern of thought. It is the indeterminate and the indeterminable. At the same time, *there is no mystery about its nature*. It reveals itself fully and completely for what it is, if only we attend to it discriminately. The roles of thought and reality are here reversed. We have no need to judge reality. For we are knowing reality more truly before we start judging it. This study of the transcendental subject is what we call the *philosophy of the spirit*.

It is quite possible that when we have carried the analysis of the subjective reality to its conclusion, there is no reflective problem left for our further consideration. Criticism will then automatically cease. We shall be face to face with the thing-in-itself which will fulfil the idea of truth. We need then reject nothing completely. Scientific knowledge is true as far as it goes and helps all mankind to unite under it. But we can go beyond it. It fails to satisfy. Logic is true as a study of forms of thought and is universally accepted. But we soon realize that the form is not the thing. We have to go beyond it too. Metaphysics is the study of the thing itself. But although we can know quite a lot about it, the problem of knowledge is not wholly solved at that stage. We have still a question, what is its own nature? That takes us to the philosophy of the spirit which starts with self-revelation of the subject-self as the *speaking I* to us and ends in Absolute Truth. There is then nothing left to be known. We have that knowledge of reality which is free from the *vagaries of language and thought*. For it is neither expressible in language nor knowable through concepts.

The concept of philosophy recommended by us is that of a reflective study of experience itself with a view to arriving at the real truth behind it. For his experience is a mixture of truth and error. We have to distinguish the two, reject the error and retain the truth.

Truth is not in a distant realm. It is nowhere else except within our experience. Only we need to attend to it. This is not easy. It requires a thorough-going analysis of experience in order to bring out its hidden meaning—that which we *really know* as against what we appear to know. We shall then become aware of the levels of truth and of the inherent logic of experience which drives us from the lower levels to the higher levels, till we reach the very highest. Briefly put, it is not the realm of the given that we have to exploit in philosophy, it is rather the realm of the not given and the hidden. The objective mind feels at home with the realm of matter. That is where the scientist is at his best. *Subject, self* and *spirit* are terms that do not signify much for him. But these are very things for which the philosopher finds a meaning and a significance that far transcend in importance the most revolutionary findings of science. What happens in nature is of secondary importance. What I know of myself is primary.

## II

The spirit may be conceived as *intelligent substance*. Anything that undeniably exists and is intelligent is spirit. We find this in our own self which is indicated by the speaking *I*. This *I* is to be distinguished from the mind. The mind is known to us by its acts and states. It is not therefore intelligent in its own nature. Whatever can be known thinkingly or introspectively or known in some other way such as inference etc. cannot be itself intelligent. It is an *object* of a kind. It is *this, that* or *the other* thing. If the mind functions intelligently that intelligence is *borrowed*. It is borrowed from the self behind it, which has no acts or states, which is a kind of pure intelligence and immutable. This pure subject or immutable intelligence is the real seer (*Drista*). It is the *real I* which is always found in combination with, and confused with, the spurious *I* or the mental modification of *I* often called the empirical ego.

The empirical ego is a series of mental modifications or '*I*'-s which has the appearance of unity and continuity. We take this mixed and confused kind of entity, partly intelligent and partly non-intelligent, partly eternal and partly noneternal, as the real person (*jiva*) with a history. This person knows, acts and suffers. He determines his



own destiny. There is not one prson but many persons. They are all related to a world outside, other individuals in society and God. This is what is called personalism in the west. It is the highest category of the spirit for many philosophers. God is a person.

This conception of the spirit is found by many in India as only half-way to the truth. A person, however exalted, has certain limitations. He may or may not have a physical body. But he must have a mind and function with it. To know him for what he is, we must know how he thinks, feels and wills. He must have motives and purposes. Except perhaps God, he must have a history and a store of aptitudes and attitudes he has acquired in it. He is invariably a complex entity, and in the human case, a growing and changing entity, with certain ideals or goals to realize. Most important of all we can never know him directly for what he is in himself. We can only approach him from the outside through certain sheaths or covers or bodies or ways of behaviour, and know him as the inner core of intelligent being behind them. He is the *inner person*. This gives him the appearance of smallness, finitude, hidden location, etc. We fully understand what 'I' and 'You' mean as used by us. But even while we understand them as truly spiritual we cannot get away from their distinctiveness and consequent limitation. Is this limitation and difference natural to them as spiritual entities or is it the result of some confusion of the spirit with the non-spirit? We contend that it is the latter.

We can transcend the person. The deeper we go within him, the greater he becomes. The most inward thus becomes at the same time the most pervasive and the limitless. The 'I' and the 'you' are only symbols or pointers to the Great truth. This truth cannot be spoken, mind and speech turn back from it, unable to reach it or to express in. Silence is the only appropriate response. Oh wonder of wonders that such Greatness should lie so near us and we are so ignorant of it.

*Here then is the fruition sought by philosophy of the concept of truth.* There is nothing speculative about this and nothing higher in philosophic value. Truth is to be seen; and truth will make us free. If anybody argues that all this is mere make-believe and that there is nothing to be seen here, we shall not join issue with him. The true is known by its fruit. Even so the knowledge of the truth.

It must bring that enlightenment which solves the toughest problems of life and brings peace to the troubled mind. Man becomes fearless, and he crosses the ocean of sorrow and attachment ( *śoka* and *moha* ). May be, philosophers differ in their capacity of philosophising and their power of discrimination. They also differ in their perceptiveness of the subtlest of things. One thing is certain : We may not be able to judge the truth but the truth will not fail to judge us. We may fail the truth but the truth will not fail us. It will continue to speak to us, if only we are prepare to listen. The challenge is there. We ignore it at our cost. We are like lost sheep. The philosopher or the seer knows this, and out of compassion he helps others to find their way from the arid desert of untruth to the verdant regions of truth.

This concept of philosophy resembles somewhat Professor K. C. Bhattacharya's views on the subject. It is for the readers to find out points of agreement and difference. I have been influenced by his leading ideas, but I have developed them in my own way and from the standpoint of Advaita Vedānta. I believe that Professor Bhattacharya had the same stand-point more or less. But he brought so much of his own individuality to bear upon it that it cannot be said with absolute certainty that there was no difference between his stand-point and that of traditional Advaita Vedānta. My own position conforms to the latter more or less fully. My concept of philosophy is based on the same.

## THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

T. R. V. MURTI

It must indeed appear odd to non-philosophers that we should be discussing, after indulging in philosophical activity for some thousands of years, what must appear as a preliminary question, the nature of Philosophy. The lack of agreement among philosophers on fundamentals is another source of vexation. There does not seem to be, in principle, any solid basis for agreement. I may make a preliminary observation that not only there are different philosophical systems but different concepts of philosophy are implied by them. It is not the case that all or some of them subscribe to a common concept of philosophy and only differ in their doctrinal content, in the way they elaborate and develop the common concept. If that were so, the differences would be traceable solely to defective logic or clumsily deductions. And being a procedural defect, this should be amenable to correction by closer attention to rules of logic and by discussion. Curiously, debate and discussions do not remove the philosophical differences; they only serve to highlight them. Nothing is more common in philosophical discussions than to find the disputants emerging at the end of the discussions with their differences more accentuated. If a neutral logic acceptable to all had been available to us, the differences would have been composed long ago. Deficiency of disinterestedness or of logical skill does not appear to be sufficient to explain lack of unanimity. It would be truer to say that our logical and empirical differences are themselves the necessary expressions of our metaphysical differences, ultimate standpoints. The concept of philosophy at the back of each philosophy is like the seed of which the philosophical system is the grownup plant. It could be demonstrated, without calling for excessive ingenuity, that historically several conceptions of philosophy have been entertained by philosophers. The differing and conflicting answers given to this question in this seminar would but confirm this contention.

This consideration should prove of help in understanding why the elucidation of the concept of philosophy is more difficult than the exposition of a philosophical system. For, the former is a question of the second order, of a deeper layer underlying the overt and avowed one. In a sense, therefore, the question regarding the concept of philosophy is a philosophy of the history of philosophy or a philosophy



of philosophy. It stands on a deeper level of reflective consciousness. Not only do we philosophise ( or take note of the historical systems ) but we are further led to the principle or pattern behind this.

Instances of philosophy occur first, and this enables us to raise a general question regarding its nature. Metaphysics as a natural disposition is cultivated or indulged in almost inevitably, irresistibly. The history of philosophy, whether Indian or Greek or Chinese, would tell us that as soon as man had attained a reasonable command over to allow him some leisure and had cultivated the arts, especially poetry, philosophy dawned. Man began asking questions about the world around him, about his own origin and destiny. The philosophising was natural, not deliberately or artificially stimulated. In a game or in mathematics, one starts with precise definitions, postulates and operational rules and develops the subject. The "postulation pattern" is totally foreign to philosophy, as it is to any genuine and serious concern of man. The poet does not ask "what is poetry" before breaking out into poetry. One does not ask what is language and what are the rules of syntax before using language. It is indeed a misfortune for philosophy that the mathematical or natural science mode of knowledge was held before it as a norm to emulate. Metaphysics as a natural disposition has always been with man. We do not deliberately go about manufacturing it. We can only become explicitly self-conscious of this. Philosophy which begins as a speculative and interpretative activity grows to maturity through self-reflection and self-awareness. This I think is a unique feature of philosophy. And only from this maturity of self-reflection can we understand philosophy.

In explication of the nature of philosophical consciousness, I pose two questions principally :

1. What features distinguish an admittedly philosophical investigation from others ? Can we find any common ground, either some basic tenet or method or attitude which marks of philosophy from other disciplines ? That is, what makes any enquiry philosophical ?
2. Why do philosophies differ ? Are their differences resolvable or are they ultimate and incommensurable ?

The questions almost run into each other, and I shall not make any serious attempt to keep them separate.

In answering these questions, I naturally rely on the history of philosophy. This supplies samples or instances of philosophical consciousness, its exercise in concreto. But my method is not historical. I do not think that the question "what is Philosophy" is answered by tracing the genetic development of philosophy from its crude beginnings and by piecing together the different stages. For one thing, it can rightly be contended that this process is a continuing one and is not yet completed. The whole picture is not present before us. The piecing together of different stages and processes is itself possible because of a pattern or a whole into which we fit the various stages and steps. A philosophy is presupposed in the historical construction which, however, is offered as an explanation of that philosophy.

The phenomenological or eidetic method of analysing the content or structure of each idea or sphere of ideas from ideas from within from its authentic and autonomous standpoint, promises, more fruitful results. But there does not seem to be a philosophy idea, a general and abstract notion. Each philosophy is a unique activity of interpretation through pre-suppositions in its speculative (or metaphysical) phase, and the explicit awareness of these pre-suppositions is its fuller and mature reflective phase.

Throughout this paper I am maintaining that the concept of philosophy is nothing but the exposition of the philosophical consciousness as concretely exemplified in all the historical systems of philosophy. My approach is more existentialist than phenomenological. Any one who has not practised philosophy himself or had not closely associated himself with it would find it empty and elusive. My concern is with the philosophy situation, and not with an idea. The concept of philosophy if it is taken to mean a logical idea with a dictionary meaning or an accepted differentia, is misleading. I believe that although a positive definition of philosophy is not possible it is however, feasible to indicate some of the features which distinguish philosophy from other investigations.

Attempts have been made and will be made to deny philosophy or to assimilate it, by reduction, to the logic of science or the elucidation of the usage of words. The nature of philosophy "provokes" these attempts, very much like the innocence of the lamb which 'incites' assaults on itself. Philosophy claims to convey knowledge of things terribly important and is meant as a discourse

much in the same way as science or literature or religion. It uses the forms of knowledge and is clothed in the same linguistic garb as the other disciplines. This may explain why philosophy has been identified with these and some of them in turn mistaken for philosophy.

## II

What strikes me as the most conscious characteristic of philosophical investigation is that it is reflective awareness. By reflection I mean the act of turning upon itself and one's doings. It may also be described as criticism or sitting in judgment over things—a kind of regressive movement.

We can imagine a world in which people said or did things without, at any time, being explicitly aware of what they said or did, steeped in stupor and dullness, like the lotus-eaters. If all our perceptions were completely in accord with existent things, there would be no occasion for reflection, no need for examination of oneself. On the practical side, if all our desires were satisfied as they arose, in us, if there were no frustration, there would be no disappointment. Hence no need to ponder and to take stock of the situation. If a machine or contraption were running smoothly without hitch, we would not care to know how it works and what is the economy of its parts. Because our perceptions are not always veridical and only few of our desires are satisfied and even they not wholly, we become reflective. Our attention is deflected from the objective to the subjective.

Unlike Poetry or Art which have their origin in wonder and ecstasy, Philosophy begins with doubt and disappointment. The basic keys with which philosophy operates are the "the Real" and "the False". In the history of Philosophy, this duality takes various forms—

Being and Non-Being ( Becoming ),  
 Archetypes and Copies ;  
 Form and Matter ;  
 God and Finite Self ;  
 Noumenon and Phenomena ;



Even the positivist who denies metaphysics uses such terms as true and pseudo-propositions.

Philosophy is essentially evaluative, not organisational or descriptive. It may be doubted whether even in organising (stringing together) some data or in describing them we are not importing into them our slants and bias. Is any neutral description or statement possible, although this may be held out as desirable? Criticism would show, as Kant has shown conclusively, that we cannot organise unorganised materials, if we were not already armed with some categories or patterns under which to organise them. This seems fairly obvious.

Though innocently stated as a description of facts, every philosophical system is an evaluation of things or a prescription to view them in a particular way. We do not acquire this prescription out of empirical data by abstraction or generalisation. The empirical data are far too neutral and pointless to yield a standpoint or bias. Nor do we deliberately set about formulating them by postulation in a sportive way like the rules of a game. Philosophers are not conscious of their presuppositions and standpoints, and believe them to be objective and real, until they are forced in the open by other equally plausible but conflicting points of view. In Science, a dispute regarding rival hypotheses can, at least in principle, be settled by an appeal to sense-experience in the last resort. In Philosophy, hypotheses cannot be proved or disproved in any such appeal. Disputes become interminable conflicts. Dialectic is endemic to philosophy. There is no possibility of alighting upon an empirical fact which will upset any philosophy. For every fact is interpreted by it and is itself thus conditioned. Every philosophy is an elaboration, with the help of logic and language, of a basic stand or pattern, which validates other things and is not itself validated or subjected to proof. Kant would call this an idea or Reason. Of this he says: "No actual experience has ever been completely adequate to an Idea or Reason, yet to it every actual experience belongs."

The intricacy and skill with which a particular metaphysical stand is elaborated and set forth cannot be offered as proof or justification of the promise on which it stands. A fine super-structure cannot be a proof of the title to the ground on which the edifice is erected. The elaboration and rigour of a philosophy only show that the parts of the

system are consistent and coherent ; it only proves that the consequences and implications are correctly drawn, and not that the basic principle or promise is rationally justified. I suspect that Hegel makes much of this implicatory elaboration and takes it as proof or validation of the unproved original stand. It is as if a clever witness or advocate took up an arbitrary stand and consistently stuck to it throughout the cross-examination and trial.

There is some merit in this, as many of the philosophical systems suffer from the blemish of not being internally coherent. Indian systems of philosophy are remarkably free from looseness and internal inconsistency, as each system has been cultivated for centuries by some of the best minds of the time. It can be shown that each philosophy, Indian and Western, is the self-expression of a specific metaphysical stand. If we are able to grasp the specific stand to which it is committed it should be possible to spell out all its tenets in a systematic manner. I have attempted this deduction with reference to many systems of Indian Thought. It should also be a fascinating study to give deduction.

Coherence within a closed system is not proof or justification of the basic stand ; at best, the elaboration is a self-expression and self-justification ; and we become aware of the stand itself only through its unfoldment, in its empirical exposition and application. It is clear, then, that all philosophy moves on two planes or levels—the specific metaphysical stand and its empirical elaboration through logic and language. It is this amphibious nature of philosophy that makes for its evaluating and self-expressive function. It also distinguishes it from science in which it is possible to make prepositions without explicit reference to the specific standpoint or subjective attitude, from which the preposition is made. Even in science, a completely empirical or a purely descriptive statement cannot be made ; but the direction is towards such an ideal.

### III

It must now be sufficiently clear that the key terms, Knowledge, Proof, Reasoning, Evidence, etc., used in philosophy and science are not of the same meaning. They are differently oriented. I wholly accept this part of modern linguistic analysis but draw a different

conclusion. My interest is not to deny philosophy, but disentangle it from its close embrace with other disciplines—science, art and religion.

Although philosophy is a species of theoretic consciousness and we speak of it as giving us knowledge and we also attempt to reason and establish certain propositions, and these are couched in the usual logical and linguistic forms, they should, however, be sharply distinguished from the procedure of science or mathematics. In the previous section, I dwelt at some length on the nature of philosophical knowledge. Scientific knowledge and investigation is definitely of a different genre. The confusion between them is inexcusable and should not have occurred at all. Not only laymen but philosophers themselves have been guilty of this confusion.

Logically, there should not have been the confusion. Factually and historically, however, the confusion is there and is a pervasive feature. It appears to be natural, unpremeditated and inevitable, unpreventable. This happens because we use the same language (verbal forms) and logical modes of expression, although in uncommon ways. We get over this confusion, as we grow circumspect, as we become aware of the true nature of philosophy.

But for this misadventure and its termination we would have remained ignorant of the nature of Philosophy. Only in this process of transition, in its being realised as *not* science, or mathematics or art does philosophy attain its maturity. In annulling its self-alienation, does it become aware of itself as philosophy.

The second consideration is that as each philosophy is the conceptual elaboration of an ultimate metaphysical standpoint and as argumentation or discourse is applicable within it and not outside it, every philosophical system is a metaphysical monad. This leads to certain very embarrassing paradoxes. If each metaphysical system, is monadic and incommensurable with every other system, how is discourse possible? How can we argue and convince, others? Should we give it up as futile? We say; "Tastes differ and there is no arguing about them." Should we say likewise with regard to philosophy that it is a matter of spiritual taste and temperament. This situation certainly obtains in religion. There could practically be no conversion or significant dialogue among religions which are authentically rooted, each in its basic stand.



'That philosophical systems differ basically and remain incommensurate' is in manifest conflict with our knowledge that they are so. For, if each person is committed to one system and has no traffic with others, how does he know that there are other systems and that they are incommensurable? At least there is one person who has been able to go beyond the monadic shackles and he is addressing others to do likewise. Hence, the incommensurability and monadism of metaphysical systems cannot be the last word. Besides the unique features which mark off each philosophy from the others, there should be some inexpressible common ground on which they stand.

We may here profitably consider two or three attempts to reach a stage higher than metaphysics as a natural disposition. One would be the obvious attempt to get rid of all metaphysics and pretence of knowing the supersensuous altogether. I have in view the stupendous and most consistent attempt of the Madhyamika to abjure all speculative metaphysics *drstis* or philosophical stand-points by realising their futility. The relentless Madhyamika dialectic assails each theory and through *reductio ad absurdum* arguments shows that is a *cul-de-sac*; its conclusion is right provided you grant its premise, which, however, is the thing in dispute. Both positive and negative views or a combination or a denial of them, all possible modes of speculative metaphysics, are dialectically refuted. What is left over is the Sunya. But what is Sunyata? Is it Being or Knowledge? Neither the one nor the other; for this would be to get into the same rut of metaphysics. The only safe answer is that Sunyata is the contentless dialectical awareness itself. Dialectic or criticism is true philosophy. The Madhyamika claims to be the high tribunal before which all metaphysical systems without exception are arraigned and condemned. The Madhyamika dialectic is a philosophy of philosophies.

The Kantian answer, though not so consistent, is on similar lines. We have and can have no legitimate ground to stretch the categories of the understanding beyond their meaningful application in the field of phenomena; nor do we have any non-sensuous (intellectual) intuition of the noumenon. Despairing of any *theoretic knowledge* of the noumenal entities, Kant has recourse to practical reason. The exercise of moral will vouchsafes for him his freedom from mechanical necessity and all empiricity.

The Christian Theologian has inherited a mistrust of philosophy, for which even otherwise he has not much use. Karl Barth is an extreme instance of them. Scriptural revelation provides the nexus to the existence of super-sensuous entities, and faith sustains the validity of these truths. Philosophy, when availed of, performs the useful function of rational justification and filling up of gaps.

These attempts are not only anti-metaphysical, but also anti-intellectual. For, do they not have recourse to practical reason or faith or access to the ultimate truths?

The Vedanta has an initial theological bias. It is aware that on purely rational considerations it is not possible to decide among rival metaphysical theories; for each theory claims to give the correct and only explanation of things, and yet they are in mutual conflict? Though the Vedanta avails of revelation to break through the barrier of dogmatic metaphysics, it is not anti-metaphysical, nor anti-intellectual. We do possess, according to the Vedanta, an unconditionally immediate, non-conceptual knowledge of Pure Being. It is Knowledge *through being the thing known*, knowledge from 'within' and not knowledge by representation through the medium of categories and concepts. Pure Being (Brahman) is the ultimate ground of all particular beings. It is implied in every cognition.

Could this awareness of ontic being be called knowledge? There is no valid reason for denying its cognitive character, simply because it is not arrived through essence and hence is not mediate and formal. This bias is in favour of the circumstantial and indirect mode of knowledge is itself question-begging. The opposite may well be the case. Only direct Knowledge, without the use of conceptual representation, guarantees the absolute truth of our cognition. In all other cases there is scope for deviation and distortion. As thought cannot hand in the air and is thought of something given, direct acquaintance provides the basis for knowledge by description. The Advaita Vedanta is an attempt to break through metaphysical theories to capture the direct immensity of the ontic being. Dialectical criticism, by showing the inadequacy or conceptual constructions, leads to the ground—Pure Being—on which these constructions are made. Unlike the Madhyamika Sunya, here we have a positive and primordial awareness of Being and not Nothingness.

Regarding the value of philosophical investigation, it needs to be

stated that being an autonomous activity it is not subservient to any other pursuit or interest. It is not a means, but an end in itself. Philosophical knowledge is liberation of the human mind from every kind of narrowness and prejudice. It is freedom itself.



## PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY, REASON AND FAITH

### *An Essay in Terminological Clarification*

R. PANIKKAR

I—By *Philosophy* we mean the human quest for the ultimate reality or if we prefer to stress a little more the intellectual aspect, Philosophy would then mean the human quest for the knowledge of the ultimate truth.

II—*Theology* has the same formal meaning as Philosophy described above.

III—So long as man was searching for the true or ultimate reality with all his being, without a critical, i. e. reflexive awareness on the anthropological implications of his enquiry, no discrimination was made between Philosophy and Theology; except for a slightly *essential* stress on the part of philosophy—What is reality? (that I may reach it)—and for a soft *existential* overtone on the side of Theology—How to reach reality? (for which I must know it).

IV—The distinctive feature of what in "modern" times is called Philosophy is the assumption that truth is *given*—open—to human *reason* and hence that man must *discover* and *see* that ultimate truth. Philosophy speaks of evidence, intuition and the like, all metaphors of the eye.

V—What characterizes what later on has been called Theology is the assumption that ultimate reality is *given*—open—to man, whose receiving organ for it is *faith*, and hence that man must *accept* and *hear* that reality. Theology speaks of following (a call), hearing, and the like, all metaphors of the ear.

VI—When we approach the knowledge of the ultimate reality by means of reason, we have "Philosophy", when we do it by way of faith, we have Theology. No presupposition is made in either case about the nature of reality or the contents of truth.

VII—*Reason* is understood as the intellectual power of human *evidence*, it is the noble human capacity to *see* things as they appear to the human mind. We cannot, however, jump over our own shadow; the boundaries of visibility of our reason coincide with the limits of our reason. We cannot properly *see* (i. e. have rational evidence) beyond the ontological field of our reason itself. The reality which we see with our reason or the truth we discover by it

can only be *rational* reality ( or truth ), or rather the rational aspect of reality ( or truth ). To be sure, with our reason, we may eventually *know* that reality transcends us and that it may well be a truth beyond,—beyond reason—, but we can be reasonably aware that there are many things beyond reason—, but we cannot see, i.e., understand rationally the transcendence. If Philosophy claims to be the highest knowledge about reality it must either absolutize and divinize reason or transcend it. The first case leads to idealistic Philosophy, the second one to a philosophical Theology.

VIII—*Faith* is utilised by Theology as source of a higher type of knowledge, the less inadequate *human* knowledge about the absolute ( or ultimate reality ), during the time we are ( still ) here on earth theologising ( viz., philosophising ). *Faith* is not based on our intrinsic rational seeing-power ( evidence ). We could use perhaps the metaphor of an intrinsic *hearing* ( acceptance, grasping ). *Faith* could be compared to a kind of extrinsic evidence of hearsay, not of seeing, grounded not on man, but founded somehow on the other shore already. If the ultimate reality transcends us it cannot be scrutinized by our eyes ; but if it has at all to have some connexion with us, we could use the auditive metaphor and say that the absolute may be somehow audible. Reason would be the inner eye ; it can see perhaps clearer than any other means of knowledge, but it does not reach very far. *Faith* would be the inner ear ; it can hear—perhaps not so distinctly as the eye can see—but it catches reality far beyond. We should not however abuse any metaphor.

IX. *Faith and Reason* make room for two different forms of knowledge. The latter presupposes that we are open to reality ( we discover ) ; the former that reality is open to us ( we listen ).

Reason is given to every normal human being in a lesser or greater degree. *Faith* is also given, in several degrees. ( We believe in the words of our parents, teachers, friends—in God even, if we are able to hear his word ). But reason and faith are not on the same level ; they are two different light-intensities of our human knowledge, as it were, rather than two different independent human faculties. They are neither antagonistic nor supplementary but complementary. This relation of complementarity is however a particular one :

1)—Reason cannot exist, nor work without a certain amount of faith ; it must have faith in reason itself, to begin with, as an organ

of truth ; it needs faith to accept the evidence of what it sees—human evidence being never complete. A totally perfect evidence would presuppose an absolute knowledge of the truth known and *all* its implications, which is not possible for a limited mind. Any act of reason is founded in presuppositions which have not been rationally investigated. It is in this sense that it always presupposes the *acceptance* of something. This acceptance is accepted not by reason but by a certain confidence in the very structure of our mind, which morphologically corresponds to what we have called faith.<sup>1</sup>

2)—Faith cannot do without reason : it may not *see* the internal evidence of the spoken words or the cogent necessity of the accepted truth, but it must somehow *see* ( have evidence of ) the speaker, understand the meaning of his words and be convinced of the non-contradictoriness of what is accepted. I cannot have faith in my parents, in God or in reason if I do not even know that they are my parents, or that there is a God or that I have a reason. And yet faith can be in me without my being aware of it.

Moreover, the relation between faith and reason is so close that it is given in one and the same act. By the very act of obeying my parents, because I believe in their words, I realize that they are my parents ; and because I discover they as my parents their words have a special weight (authority) for me. Rational evidence produces conviction ; but also conviction leads to rational evidence. And this conviction is the acceptance of something because it is *given* ( in some sense *heard*, not *seen* ). It is not a vicious, but a vital circle.

X—There is no "Philosophy" without a certain faith ; there is no Theology without reason. "Philosophy" has faith in reason ; Theology finds reason in faith ; it must utilise reason to handle with faith.

There is but one essential difference : the faith pre-supposed in "Philosophy" is not properly theological faith, whereas the reason

1 Even that famous argument, that to deny the "evidence" of the first principles, one has to make use of those very principles, needs an act of a certain faith in order to break the vicious circle. In fact, because we cannot disprove them, this does not mean that they are "proved". If we cannot disprove any of such principles, because the counter-argument already presupposes them, the only strictly rational consequence would be complete silence and unformulated agnosticism, if we had not a certain faith in the mechanism of our mind.



presupposed in Theology is the philosophical reason. Philosophy has a certain priority), but Theology is ultimate. "Philosophy" has a certain consistency of its own; it is based on human reason, but its claim of being the ultimate instance can only subsist if faith and therefore Theology do not exist. Theology is nothing without Philosophy; it requires its collaboration and service. However it goes further than Philosophy; it is ultimate, it is in one sense the information, the enrichment and transformation of rational Philosophy into supra-rational or plainly theological Philosophy—supposing again that faith is not an empty word.

Theology is not grounded on dogmas, but on faith. But faith requires reason and in some sense is founded on reason. Theology discovers and formulates dogmas as Philosophy discovers and formulates meta-physical (or somehow universally valid) principles.

XI—Properly speaking Philosophy and Theology go together. The task of discrimination begun in the West by the Greeks, qualified by Mediaeval scholasticism and completed in the "modern Philosophy" was somehow necessary in order to stratify the several layers of knowledge and their own realms. Today, however, the possibility is there of integrating—without mixing up the different strata of human knowledge in a more mature and comprehensive theological Philosophy or philosophical Theology.

XII—Summing up our terminological clarification, we could say:

1—Reason is that power of the human intellect which discovers truth on the basis of evidence

2—Faith is that light of the human being which accepts truth on the basis of a qualified testimony.

3—The functioning of the human intellect presupposes reason as well as faith.

4—Philosophy is that conception of reality based on reason.

5—Theology is that conception of reality based on faith.

6—Pure Philosophy or pure Theology in the sense of a total exclusion of the other's form of knowledge is not possible. Both are necessarily complementary.

7—When reason leads and controls faith we are philosophizing.

8—When faith leads and controls reasons we are theologizing.

9—There is a kind of faith whose nature requires direction and control from the part of reason. This is the stronghold of Philosophy.

10—There is said to exist a type of faith whose nature requires direction and control over reason. This is the realm of Theology.

11—As a matter of language, *what* some cultures have called "Philosophy" corresponds to *what* has been considered here as Theology

12—Whereas Western modern speculation by its critical awareness has clarified the concept of "Philosophy", it has impoverished it by reducing it to one of rational Philosophy—from which it is now emerging. On the other hand, the possible contribution of Indian Philosophy could very well be the re-instatement of the concept of Philosophy as Theology, without denying nevertheless the justified existence of a rational philosophical Science.

## THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS & METHOD\*

RAJ NARAIN AND SHRI CHANDRA

### *The Setting*

Perhaps at no other time in history were philosophers so self-conscious about their *task* as they are today. This self-consciousness seems to have arisen principally because of the impact of science upon philosophy. Science has a relatively short history. But the progress that it has made during its short history has been remarkable, and some of its achievements spectacular. On the other hand, philosophy has made little progress despite its hoary past. This has naturally raised the question whether the stalemate in philosophy was not somehow connected with what the philosophers took their task to be, and whether better results could not be attained by pursuing "scientific philosophy".\*\*

One of the aspects of progress in science has been proliferation into newer and newer domains of knowledge, each with its own subject-matter and method. Some of these domains were formerly under the realm of philosophy. These inroads into the realm of philosophy by science have again given rise to a mis-giving that the philosopher may eventually lose his vacation; and if therefore he is to survive he must rethink his task.

One of the reasons for the revitalization of science in the recent past has been the development of the theory of Relativity, which supplies a new conceptual framework for science in place of the older one inherited from Newton. Could not a similar revision of the conceptual framework of philosophy, it was thought, lead to its revitalization? The thought was reinforced by the insistence of the logician that the propositions of every branch of knowledge fall under one of the other of the categories of classification developed by him. This insistence when applied to philosophy led to an examination of the status of its propositions. The status of philosophical

---

\* We are indebted to our colleague Miss Roop Rekha Varma for the help given in the preparation of the manuscript, and to Mr. Govind Bhatt Nepali, Mr. Laxmi Kant Awathi and Mr. Ramesh Dutta Misra for discussing drafts of the paper in the departmental Research Seminars.

\*\* Cf. The Rise of "Scientific Philosophy" by Hans Reichenbach,



propositions could not be determined without prior reflection on the concept of philosophy itself.

It is well therefore that this Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy has addressed itself in its first seminar to the Concept of Philosophy.

#### *The Approach*

Our aim is to find a definition of Philosophy, as uncontroversial as possible, so that it may be accepted by philosophers even holding contrary views. But for this we shall have to change our whole approach of seeking a definition. As yet the practice of philosophers has been to define it in terms of the conclusions they reach. And consequently we find such definitions as "Philosophy is the discovery of Spirit".†

But all these definitions are faulty and commit the same mistake. First, they, commit the mistake of defining an enquiry in terms of the doctrine or conclusions reached in that enquiry. But no enquiry, whether scientific or philosophical is to be defined in terms of the doctrines actually accepted. And specially in philosophy this must not be done where all doctrines are controversial and unanimity never been achieved.

Secondly, no philosopher can follow such definitions without landing into self-contradiction. If we define philosophy as the search for Brahman or Absolute, then it logically follows that the materialists or Dualists are not philosophers. But those very persons who profess this definition apply the word 'philosopher' to materialists and others. But they can not do it consistently. The same is true of those who define philosophy as an enquiry into the uses of certain fundamental words. They apply the word 'philosopher' to Plato, Kant and Bradley which they can not do consistently. Obviously our definition must be such that we may call somebody a philosopher even if we hold his theories to be false or nonsensical.

In order to achieve what we want, let us first lay down the criteria of adequacy of the analysis or explication of the concept of

† Murti, T. R. V. *The Spirit of Philosophy*. In *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* edited by J. H. Muirhead & S. Radhakrishnan, p. 458.

philosophy, or of the meaning of the word 'philosophy'. The following three criteria seem to be most desirable :

1. The definition should enable us to identify number of problems as of roughly the same type and distinguish them from other types of problems. It should be able to make clear the distinction between philosophy and other enquiries, scientific or nonscientific.
2. It should not be wholly new and arbitrary. It should accommodate as many problems as possible which have *as a matter of fact* been called philosophical.
3. It should not presuppose the truth of any philosophical doctrine even if that is true.

Now, if we consider the history of philosophy, we can not find any coherent concept, of philosophy fulfilling the above-mentioned requirements. Therefore we shall have to do enough pruning and exclude many problems out of the domain of philosophy. If we are to distinguish, for example, between Philosophy and Natural Sciences, we shall have to exclude out of the former the problems of the ultimate constituents or elements of Nature—the problem of early Greeks and to some extent of Kanada, Gautama, and Kapila etc. In the same way, the problem of the origin of ideas, whether there are *a priori* ideas, has to be delegated to Psychology, because it can be solved by scientific and empirical methods.

In the same way, we have to be very clear about the difference between Philosophy and Religion. We come to know from religious literature that its doctrines are supported either by reasoning or by revelation. Doctrines supported by reasoning unaided by revelation constitute Metaphysics and fall in the domain of Philosophy, but doctrines based on revelation are to be excluded from Philosophy, because revelation is supposed to be a type of experience entirely different from the experiences that we as a matter of fact have. If there is an enquiry based on the experience in which religious doctrines are propounded and conclusions drawn and if we have to verify them with that type of experience, then that is actually Science. The basic nature and method of this enquiry will be logically the same as that of Physics and Chemistry, and not as that of Philosophy.

Therefore if Religion is an enquiry based on revelation, it has to be assimilated to Science rather than to philosophy. Philosophy has to be distinguished not only from the present sciences, but also from

---

any possible science that is to be based on any type of possible experience.

Besides distinguishing Philosophy from Science and Religion we have also to distinguish it from what are called the formal Sciences—Logic and Mathematics. A philosophical problem can not be solved as a mathematical one can be, because in Philosophy deduction can never be sufficient to establish any conclusion. And it is not difficult to see why it can not be so. In order to deduce the solution of a philosophical problem we will have to have some axioms or premises as we have in Mathematics. But philosophical puzzles arise mostly because the very propositions that look like axioms and can be taken to be the ultimate premises are doubted and questioned.

### *The Questions*

From these considerations we can derive some general characteristics of a philosophical question. *Any basic and sufficiently general question is philosophical if it can be solved neither by verification with any sort of experience actual or possible, nor by making deduction from any axioms.* It is not implied here that all other enquiries are useless for philosophers. Philosophical questions concern the relations between concepts that are employed in daily life, natural sciences, religion and the mathematical sciences. Therefore for a philosopher, in a way it is necessary to be familiar with them in order to see how these concepts are actually employed. This may enable him to deal with his own problem with greater ability. Though the knowledge of these enquiries may be useful to a philosopher his questions cannot be replied in the way as the questions of other enquiries can be, and the methods that are used to solve problems in the latter cannot be used by the philosopher.

The above mentioned general characterization of a philosophical question is primarily negative. But we need to know not only what philosophy is *not* but also what it is. Before giving a positive account, attention may be drawn to two ways of defining a branch of knowledge; in terms of its subject-matter and in terms of its method. Of course, the former determines to a large extent the latter. But whether it does so, and other questions concerning their relationship



are not matters to be considered just now. The point is simply that owing to special circumstances, one way is often to be preferred to the other. It may be suggested that in the present case we should adopt the latter. The reason is that one may be easily misled into presupposing some disputed philosophical issues. For example if one says, that philosophy gives information about that which is not touched upon by natural and formal sciences, then one presumes that there are facts other than those which are studied by these sciences. But this itself is very controversial and should not be presupposed in the definition itself.

#### *The Method*

Having excluded both the empirical and deductive methods, the only method which will do greatest justice to our previously laid-down requirements, and which is impartial with regard to the various philosophical disputes, seems to be conceptual clarification.

In spite of the great difficulty in giving a complete description and characterization of philosophical method, we may assert at least this much that *philosophy is a sort of survey of basic concepts, a study of their complicated relationships, differences and similarities.*

It may be pointed out here that while accepting this definition, we are presupposing no particular theory of concepts. For example, we are not committed to a Platonic theory of universals. Whatever may be the mode of their being, our view will not be affected. By accepting that there are concepts we are committed only to accept the phenomena of human understanding and of translation between different languages.

For us the question whether there are any concepts which *all* the languages have in common is not all important. There may be some such concepts; there may not be any such. But that will make no difference to a philosophical enquiry. By saying that a concept is that which can be expressed in many languages, we are simply trying to say that it is not peculiar to any one language; and that it is in no way dependent upon the languages that share the concept. We do not mean to say that it *must* be common to all languages, but it *may* be common to them. We wish to emphasize the point that philosophy is concerned primarily with concepts, conceptual relations

or conceptual systems, and not primarily with *words* and language systems. As the same concept may be expressed by different words, so a whole *conceptual system* may also be expressed by different language systems.

The question whether two languages express the same conceptual system or the question how many concepts are common between them, is a contingent empirical question, having no direct bearing upon the analysis or explication of the concepts. We can know the correctness or incorrectness of the survey without knowing, *which* language expresses the concepts analyzed. A concept is identified on the basis of its relations to other concepts, i. e., on the basis of its position in a particular conceptual system. So, an explication of a concept, that is, an assertion about its relations with some other concepts, will be true or false depending upon whether or not it really has those relations, and not upon how it is expressed by words or any other means.

*The Outcome : Necessary propositions*

This consideration establishes another important point with regard to the status of philosophical statements which record the results of our survey of concepts. This is that *these statements are necessary truths and not contingent ones*. If the very identification of a concept is made on the basis of its relations to other concepts, any statement asserting such relations will be necessarily true if true at all, otherwise necessarily false. A question may be raised about the generality or universality of a philosophical statement. If philosophy is concerned with concepts, and a particular concept may or may not be expressed by *all* the languages, then, the question is, should we not say that a philosophical statement is relative to those languages which express the concept analyzed by that statement? Even if we give up talking about languages, we may talk about different *conceptual systems*. A concept may or may not be found in a particular conceptual system. Then, is a philosophical statement clarifying that concept *relative* to those conceptual systems in which it is found?

Explication may take at least as many forms as there are possible conceptual relations. For example, Philosophy is not only analysis

in the strict sense of the term, though that is an important part of it. It does show part-and whole relationships between different concepts. but this type of activity does not exhaust it. A philosophical activity may consist also in showing similarities or differences of a concept with other concepts. Moreover, a philosopher should not be deprived from synthesizing concepts and even forming some new ones. As a matter of fact, often, while explicating *vague* concepts in ordinary use, some factor of *precisification* does come in, and in this sense a philosopher is, giving a new life to the concept, or a more determinate and reformed usage to it.

*The Outcome : its value and function*

Another point to be considered is in regard to the justification of a philosophical proposition. What is the *criterion* of a *correct* explication? This demand for a criterion for justifying the propositions of *any* intellectual discipline seems *prime facie* to be legitimate. If some enquiry really leads to cognitive results, i. e. if it really gives some *knowledge*, then the statements formulating those results should be capable of justification; and if so, there should be some criterion to justify them. Do we need a criterion also for deciding whether or not an explication of a concept is correct? The case seems to be somewhat different here. It is not easy to see *what remains there to decide after* one has told what sort of relations a concept has with other concepts. That the situation is peculiar can be seen if we formulate the demand for a criterion in an other way. The question may be asked if two philosophers disagree as to whether or not a concept has some relations with some other concepts, and if their explication cannot be shown to be self-contradictory, then the very disagreement shows that they have in mind *two different* concepts and so there is no genuine dispute between them. They may be misled into supposing that they are describing *the same concept*, because they may be using the same *word*. But the very fact that they describe the concept which each says the word expresses, by means of *different conceptual relations*, establishes that in spite of using the same *word*, the concept expressed by it is different for each of them. The point simply is that a concept is defined in terms of the relations it holds with other concepts.



The problem of criterion is genuine in some other circumstances, viz. when one is concerned not only with explicating any concept whatever, but in giving a concept in *actual usage*. Mainly three questions remain after one has described relations between the concept under consideration and others.

First we like to know whether or not the identified concept is in actual usage. This needs a criterion. Of course, this issue can be decided only by empirical methods. Perhaps, the questionnaire method in which Arne Neass, and others are doing pioneering work, will be successful in this direction. But at the same time it also becomes clear that this type of enquiry cannot be called philosophical.

Secondly, the question may be raised, how far is it useful in this identified concept useful? This may be taken to mean, how far is it useful in dealing with matters in daily life, in conducting scientific enquiry or in developing some formal system? Obviously, this problem too is unphilosophical, for the simple reason that the method of its solution will be empirical.

Now, 'generality', 'universality' or 'being relative to some conceptual system' may mean several things. We may distinguish three senses of 'generality' of a philosophical statement :

1. It may mean that the concept analyzed by a philosophical statement is expressed by *all* the language systems or that this concept is found in all the conceptual systems.
2. It may mean that the concept analyzed is used actually by all the persons.
3. It may mean that the statement is necessarily true, that it has no exception ; i. e. that if anyone *understands* that statement, he is sure to accept it as true.

We have seen that the first sense is completely irrelevant to the truth value of philosophical statements. And if this is the sense, then of course, it is not necessary that a philosophical statement should be universal. But that will be a peculiar use of the term 'universal'. And the same is true with regard to the second sense also for they are not entirely different senses. In both really what can be denied is only the generality of the *usage of a concept*, and not that of its *analysis*. One single person may have formed some unique concept and it may have been expressed only in his personal code-language. Yet if he gives an explication of that concept, that will be

true necessarily if true at all. *He* can see that it is necessarily true because he can also understand it. We may not see any point in calling it necessary, but we should not forget that at the same time we are equally unable to understand it entirely.

And this point has explained our third sense also. *This* is the genuine sense of generality of philosophical statements. And in this sense, we maintain that philosophical propositions are completely universal, and necessary. It is sometimes held that the necessary truths are relative to conceptual systems to which they belong. This is misleading and pointless. For it is hard to understand what can it mean to say that a proposition is *necessary* but it is *necessary* in *only some systems*. This seems self-contradictory, because it seems to imply that it is *not* necessary in some other systems. But the situation is like this. Since the concept itself is identified by means of its position in a conceptual systems, i. e., by means of its relations with other concepts, these relations will remain the same in *any* system if it and those other concepts are found in that system at all. With regard to a particular conceptual system there can be only two possible alternatives; either it possesses those concepts and then the philosophical proposition in question will be necessarily true in that system. Or it may not possess those concepts and then what we should say is that within that system our proposition will become *unintelligible*, and *not* that it has become *contingent*.

After these clarifications we proceed to another point, viz. the actual form or nature of this philosophical activity. Is there any particular form to which every conceptual explication should conform? Our answer to this question is in the negative. No *single* form of explication can be distinguished.

It may be of course unempirical in the sense that one can discover by a *priori* philosophical method the positive and negative relations of the concept in question with other concepts essential for various sciences and formal systems. And to this extent we can say whether or not the concept in question is helpful for those sciences.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the question may be raised, how far does the explication remove philosophical puzzles? It seems that the main point of doing analysis or explication is that of removing the confusions and misunderstanding which philosophical questions

involve. Most of the 'philosophical' puzzles seem to be based on some conceptual ambiguities or confusions. By clarifying concepts, their relations with each other, the points of confusions are made evident; and thus what was a puzzle before, does not remain so any more, and the problem is dissolved. Not that analysis always proves directly that some philosophical questions are self-contradictory, or pseudo-problems, or nonsensical, but it may show in different ways, often indirectly, the *pointlessness* of the question. It may show, for example, in some cases that the metaphysician in raising his questions, either demands something self-contradictory or has nothing *definite* to demand, although he himself is conscious of neither of these facts due to some confusions. For example, we may take the problem of induction raised by Hume. By clarifying the notions of induction, justification etc., it is shown that Hume has no definite thing to demand. The way he raised his problem and elaborated it shows clearly that he will accept neither deduction, nor induction as a 'justification' in this case and does not tell us what else he wants. Then it is clear that he will accept *nothing* as a justification of induction. But if this is definite from the start, then what is his demand? What remains in the 'problem' itself? Obviously no question is genuine if it is certain that it will be satisfied by *no* answer whatever. Thus the 'problem of induction' is dissolved by showing its pointlessness.

In the last we may consider the much disputed point whether Philosophy is concerned with Reality or some sort of facts. It has commonly been held that philosophy is concerned with the most fundamental and general features of reality. But what can these features of facts be? We have seen that if philosophy can propound any truths, they are necessary truths. And a necessary truth is one which tell us what is impossible. But that such and such a state of affairs is impossible can be called a fact or a feature of what actually exists in a very far-fetched and misleading way. It may still be said that though Philosophy does not describe any feature of existing things, it limits the range of possible worlds. It tells us what *cannot* be real. But this too is misleading. The truths, whether analytic or not, whose necessity can be uncontroversial, are those the opposite of which cannot be thought or comprehended, because the very fact that their opposites can be thought inclines philosophers to challenge their *necessity*. From this it follows that we cannot understand what



state of affairs or situation has been eliminated. Therefore it is more correct to say that a necessary truth instead of eliminating the possibility of a state of affairs, checks us from committing conceptual mistakes that result in nonsense. The function of a philosophical proposition thus is to save us from such mistakes or self-contradictory commitments, and not to inform us about the range of possible worlds.

*Post-script*

If our view of philosophy is correct, then this paper may be taken as elucidating the concept of philosophy by *example*. The question, "what is Philosophy" is a philosophical question, because of its generality and un-answerability by the methods of induction and deduction. The question has been answered by applying the philosophical method to it, and the outcome, we hope, has been a better *understanding* of the concept of philosophy by knowing its interrelationships of similarity and difference with other concepts. In case, the outcome is not what we had hoped for, this should be attributed to *our* inability in using the method, rather than to a limitation of the method.

## THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

K. J. SHAH

In this paper, I do not propose to present a particular concept of philosophy as *the* concept of philosophy. To do so would be to vindicate that concept of philosophy as against the other concepts; and this cannot be done unless one has already accepted a particular way of dealing with specific philosophical problems.<sup>1</sup> What I propose to do is to explain a particular concept of philosophy—by comparing and contrasting it with one or more other concepts of philosophy; and in the process also to explain how and why I do philosophy — or rather, how I would like to do philosophy and why.

### I

Let us begin by contrasting two concepts of philosophy implied by—or illustrated by—two views concerning the nature of a physical object—say, a table. According to one view, that there is a table is a matter of its seeming to me, feeling to me etc. that there is a table. ( Such a view, I shall call subjectivism—the view of philosophy IA, and in the sense relevant to the discussion; it could be taken as representative of traditional metaphysics ). According to the other view, a table is a logical construction out of sense-data or sensations; i. e. sentences in which the word 'table' occurs are translatable into, or analysable into, or reducible to sentences in which occur words and expressions which refer to table-like sense-data or sensations<sup>2</sup> ( such a view, I shall call logical empiricism—the view of philosophy IB ).

At first sight these two answers seem to imply two different concepts of philosophy. According to the first answer, philosophy

---

1. There is a grave danger in talking about '*the*' concept of Philosophy; one gets involved in a general discussion of the merits and demerits of a particular concept of philosophy, rather than discovering the possibilities and limitations of a particular approach by examining the particular problems in detail.

2. Our purpose is to consider the concept of philosophy implied in each view. This does not demand that the view be stated in its most refined form, or that we consider whether the view in question is correct or not. The first view one may designate subjectivism—ontological as well as epistemological; and the second, one may designate logical empiricism, regarding the nature and existence of physical objects.

is concerned with the nature of physical objects, say, a table; according to the second answer, philosophy is not concerned with the nature of physical objects, but with the meaning of physical words; and this concern expresses it by considering the meaning of sentences in which physical object words occur.

But both these answers are answers to the same question; What is the nature of physical objects? It is therefore worth considering whether the answers really imply two different views of philosophy; and if they do, what exactly the difference between the two views is.

Let us consider the first answer and the arguments for the answer;

- (i) What I know are only my own sensations.
- (ii) Sensations do not preclude the possibility of my not knowing the physical object. (e. g. in dreams, hallucinations, etc.).
- (iii) But I do know sometimes that there is a table; and I cannot know that there is a table, unless there is a table.
- (iv) Therefore, that there is a table is a matter of its seeming to me, feeling to me etc.

The premises and the conclusion of this argument have the air of being empirical. But are they really so? Take the first premise in the argument of the subjectivist philosopher. He accepts this premiss not because he is uncertain as to whether he is awake or dreaming or having a hallucination. In fact, he is quite certain in the usual sense of the term that he is awake, and he sees the tables and chairs there. Whatever the evidence, to him the truth of the premiss is unassailable. To the subjectivist philosopher 'know' can be used in respect of sensations only; the physical object may be, at best, a matter of inference.

What is true of this premiss is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the other premisses and the conclusion also. Despite their empirical air, the premisses and the conclusion, are true not empirically, but necessarily and logically. As such they represent the form of our discourse about physical objects, sensations etc. and they define—not in terms of genus and differentia etc., but in terms of use—the meanings of the words—'physical objects', 'sensations', etc. involved in them.

And now let us consider our second answer. Apparently it is about the meanings of words like 'table', 'table-like sense-data', or



table-like sensations'. And the meaning of the word 'table' is explained in terms of words like 'table-like sense-data 'or tablish sensations', by considering the relation between sentences in which words occur. But a word is not just a shape or a sound ; it is a part of our discourse, which is a part of our activities in which reference to and dealing with objects are involved. In so far as this is so, the explanation of the meaning of words cannot be given without explaining the nature of reality and the relations existing therein.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the answer which presumably is concerned with the nature of a physical object is also concerned with the explanation of the meanings of words ; and the answer which presumably is concerned with the meanings of words is also concerned with the nature of reality. But if this is so, can we say that two different concepts of philosophy are implied by the two different answers ? The different answers represent a difference in style, and not a difference in substance. But is this only a difference in style ? Or even if it is only a difference in style is it not important ? The importance of the difference in style is this : when the answer is put in terms of reality and experiences, if different persons give different answers, there is nothing to be done except to say that the experiences of different persons are different. For example, if one says that the existence of a table is a matter of sensations, and another says that the existence of a table is not merely a matter of sensations, it could lead to a deadlock from which there is no way out. The two disputants are making claims, each about his own experience, and each, therefore, knows best. Whereas, when the answer is put in terms of the meanings of words, the existence of more than one answer need not lead to such helplessness. It is possible to consider the meanings of words publicly and objectively in terms of their use ; and thus to attempt to resolve the differences. In so far as this is so, to see that philosophical questions about reality, nature, etc., are questions about the meanings of words, is not merely a differences in

---

3. We have the idea that word, thought and object could each of them exist in isolation from the other two. It is possible to produce examples of such isolation. But it is necessary to realise that such isolation is possible only for the instances of a category ; for the category the three—the word, the thought and the object form a unity.

style ; but a substantial difference which contributes towards the better understanding and answering of philosophical questions.

## IIA

Now let us contrast both these views about the nature of a physical object with another view which also claims to deal with the same question ; and then contrast the concepts of philosophy implied by the first two views on the one hand, and the third view on the other.

The view is that the word 'see' does not have the same sense in 'I see a table' when the table is there ( e. g. in waking life ) ; as it has in 'I see a table' when the table is not there ( e. g. in a dream ). One of the ways in which the difference in sense can be described is by pointing out that 'see' in the context of dream is used only in the past tense ; whereas 'see' in the context of waking life may be used both in the present and the past tense. In the case of the dream A cannot say to B : what you saw was y and not x ; whereas in the case of the waking life this can be done. One might say in this way we plot the logical place of 'see' in our language, in our life.<sup>4</sup>

What is the concept of philosophy implied by this view, and how is it to be compared with the two concept of philosophy mentioned in I ?

(a) We cannot distinguish this concept of philosophy (let us say, linguistic analytical ) from both the concepts of philosophy IA and IB, by saying that according to the linguistic analytical concept of philosophy, philosophy is concerned with the meanings of words ; because the concept of philosophy IB ( logical empiricism ) is also concerned with the meaning of words.

Therefore, if the linguistic analytical concept of philosophy is to be distinguished from the logical empiricist concept, its concern with the meanings of words must be shown to be of a different character from that of logical empiricism. In the case of logical

4. According to Austin, ".....it might be better to say that the implications of 'perceive' may differ in different constructions than just that there are two senses of 'perceive' ( J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, p. 90 ). Even if Austin's preference is accepted, our discussion of the concept of philosophy is not affected, only instead of talking about different senses of 'see' we shall have to talk about the different implications of 'perceive' in different constructions.

empiricism, the concern with meaning is a concern with different level analysis (Wisdom). In the case of linguistic analysis, the concern with meaning is not a concern with different level analysis, but a concern with a description of meaning in terms of the connections (contextual implications) of a sentence containing the word, with other sentences. But a different level analysis also gives us a description of the meaning. Therefore, the difference between logical empiricism and linguistic analysis in respect of their concern with meaning is more clearly explained by saying that logical empiricism is concerned with description of meaning which involves different level analysis; whereas linguistic analysis is concerned with description of meaning which does not involve different level analysis. A different level analysis involves description, but a description does not necessarily involve a different level analysis.

(b) But what difference does this difference in concern with meaning make to one's concept of philosophy? Though it is true that when from being concerned with reality, we become concerned with the meanings of words, it is possible at least in theory, for us, to resolve the differences with reference to our use of words, so long as we are concerned with different level analysis, all attempts to give a different level analysis fail—no translation of physical object sentences into sensation sentences is acceptable. In this, the logical empiricist is like the subjectivist who cannot meet the sceptical objection that the subjectivist account is inadequate on account of its indirectness, or incompleteness or both.<sup>5</sup> But when we are concerned with the differences in contextual implications of the physical object sentences, and the sensation sentences, it is possible to meet the demand for the description of meaning.<sup>6</sup> It is this which distinguishes the linguistic analytical concept of

5. This is not to say that the linguistic analytical account is not open to difficulties; but that if the difficulty is that it has not achieved what is set out to do, it can be met; and otherwise the difficulty is not regarding its correctness, so much as the point of it all, and this is considered later on in the paper.

6. There is considerable difficulty regarding the concept of use; and the use of the word that is to be taken into consideration for a correct description. And yet it is possible to define it enough to give a description. (See Gilbert Ryle: *Ordinary Language* in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. LXII (1953))



philosophy not only from the logical empiricist concept but also from the subjectivist concept of philosophy.

(c) The difference between the linguistic analytical concept of philosophy and the concepts of philosophy (I) may be understood by saying that whereas the former seeks to give an account of meaning and reality in terms of what they are ordinarily understood to be, the latter seeks to give an account of meaning and reality in terms of what they ought to be understood to be, in terms of what they in their essence or ultimate nature are.

(d) One consequence of this difference between the concepts of philosophy I and II is: according to the concept of philosophy I, the account of reality and meaning we get is more or less a unity—we get a system of philosophy; whereas according to the concept of philosophy II, the account of reality we get is a manifold one—there are many meanings and realities, there are several categories of meaning and reality.

But to state the differences between the different concepts of philosophy I and II, is not necessarily to give reasons for preferring one of them to the other. How are we to choose between these different concepts of philosophy, or these different ways of doing philosophy? Or, to put it differently, does the fact that the linguistic analytical approach describes the various categories which we actually do accept and distinguish, make it more acceptable? Supposing that the various categories as described by this view are usually accepted, does it mean that they are acceptable, worthy of acceptance? Does our actual acceptance of a category also make it valid? It might be suggested that our acceptance of the category does make it acceptable, because it is objective in so far as it is exemplified in our life. In the case of a philosophical system (according to concepts of philosophy I), the account we give of reality or of the meanings of words has no support in actual exemplification. In fact it arises by overemphasising a particular feature of our experience—a particular category (say matter or mind) beyond its actual limits. Such different emphasis may be placed differently

---

7. The distinction between the two can be described in terms of mathematics which has application, and the mathematics which has no application, but which may come to have application.

by different persons, and therefore the acceptance of a system is personal and arbitrary.

But it might be suggested that the fact that there is actual exemplification of a category does not imply that it is acceptable. What it implies is that there are criteria for the acceptance of a statement about an instance which falls under the category—e. g. there are criteria for accepting the statement 'there is a table which is about a table, an instance which falls under the category of physical object. The criteria are that I see it, feel it, etc., where 'see' 'feel' have certain contextual implications. But this does not imply that we have criteria for the acceptance of a statement about the category, e. g. we have no criteria for accepting the statement that 'there is a table' (physical object) because I see it, feel it etc. In so far as this is so, our acceptance of it is an assumption, is arbitrary and personal.<sup>8</sup>

But is there not a difference in the arbitrariness or assumptions involved in the two concepts of philosophy? (i) It is true that no justification can be given for the acceptance of a particular category; but is any justification required? (ii) And even if a justification were required, in the case of a philosophical system, a justification is required not only for the acceptance of the categories (whether as appearances or as partial reality, or even as unreal) but also for a certain hierarchical ordering of them. The personal or evaluative element involved in such ordering is not present in the case of the *acceptance of the accepted categories*.

But it may be said that it is wrong to think that no evaluative element is involved in the acceptance of the accepted categories—in the linguistic analytical account of the various categories and their interrelation from the unwilling-ness to order the categories into a hierarchy, it follows that we accept them all as equally valid. This becomes especially clear, if, instead of taking such categories as matter, mind, number etc. we take the value categories—the moral, the aesthetic and the religious categories. In describing the

8. As Waismann puts it: "No philosophic argument ends with a Q. E. D. However forceful, it never forces. There is no bullying in philosophy, neither with the stick of logic, nor with the stick of language." (In 'How I see Philosophy?' Contemporary British Philosophy. 3rd Series, Ed. H. D. Lewis).

meaning of these value words, in so far as we depend upon their actual usage, and in so far as we think of actual usage as also a ground for the acceptance of the category, are we not supporting the existing values? <sup>9, 10</sup>

But it might be said that though in giving an account of value words in terms of actual usage, we tend to accept the existing values, we need not do so. To describe our concepts, and categories is not to say that there will be no new concepts, no new developments. In fact such new developments may take place independently of our description of the use; and such new developments may provide material for further description. If this is so, can we not say that there are grounds for preferring the linguistic analytical approach to the systemic approach to philosophical problems?

Before we proceed further with this question, we shall first consider a general argument, which if it were true, would make any such preferences unjustifiable. The general argument is concerning the relationship between one's general approach to philosophy and one's discussion of particular problems. At the very beginning of this paper we said that in order to vindicate and even explain a Concept of philosophy, one must depend on one's discussion of the particular philosophical problems. On the other hand, it is sometimes held that far from our discussion of the particular problems throwing light on our general approach, it is our general approach that determines the discussion of particular problems. In fact, our discussions and conclusions with reference to the particular problems are rationalisations of our general approach. If this is true, then there can be no question of preferring one concept of philosophy to another.

But is this argument acceptable? (i) The relation between a

---

9. There is dispute whether a neutral description of the meanings of value words can be given. But whatever view one holds on this matter, our main line of argument is not affected. In so far as we do not succeed in giving a neutral description of the meanings of the terms and accept them as valid; we are making neutrality itself a value. In so far as we do not succeed in giving a neutral description, there is all the more reason for saying that our linguistic analysis also involves acceptance of values.

10. In fact it has been suggested by Prof. Gellner that the linguistic analytical movement in philosophy is the result of the crisis of values—our inability to accept a particular value as superior. (*Crisis in the humanities*, Ed. J. H. Plumb. Chap. V. pp. 45-81.)



general philosophical approach and the discussion of particular philosophical problems is not necessarily from the general approach to the discussion of a particular problem. If we take a fully developed philosophy, logically the relationship between the general approach and the discussion of particular problems can be seen to be mutual as is the relationship between the dictum de omni et nullo and a particular syllogistic argument ( e. g. consider the philosophical system of Spinoza ). And if we take the actual development of a philosophical system over a period of time, the relationship between the general approach and the discussion of particular problem is likely to be mutual, rather than in one particular direction or the other.

(ii) The concept of rationalisation, as used in the case of motives, is used to distinguish between the declared or apparent motive and the real motive, or the apparent reason and the real reason for an action. It is true that there are theories according to which all ostensive motives are rationalisations. But to do so, is to deprive 'rationalisation' of all its significance. In order that it may have significance, it is necessary that there should be cases for any particular motive, where it is not merely rationalisation ; but is a reason. If this is so, to say that all discussion of particular problems is rationalisation of the general approach would not seem to be right.

## II B

But suppose we accept that there are grounds for preferring the linguistic analytical approach to the systematic approach, what is the point of it ? A description of the meaning may not rule out the development of new concepts, but it does not help such development either. In contrast with this the systematic approach, speculatively suggests ideal theoretical possibilities which are a means of ( understanding and ) extending the actual.

It has been said that the point of the description of meaning of words in terms of actual use is that it reveals to us that the source of our speculative metaphysics lies in the fascination that forms of expression exercise upon us ( Wittgenstein ) ( e. g. 'I see a table used in the context of an actual table as also in the context of a hallucination ). And by so doing it stops us from a fruitless chase

of ultimate reality. But this is not all that the description of the meaning of words achieves for us.

Speculative metaphysics ( even if we consider the limited example we have chosen ) is not merely a matter of verbal confusion. If it were merely such a matter, it should be possible to replace the word 'see' which is used in two senses, by two different words, and there would be no problem. But any attempt to do so, does not succeed. The confusion is not only in words, but also in actuality—in life. In so far as this is so, the description of the meanings of words gives one an insight into, an understanding of, our life and our morality.

Even if this is so, it gives to one only an understanding of life as it is, it does not help one to find a better life or to understand it more deeply. Systematic metaphysics at least tries to do so. Not only that, even if systematic metaphysics does not succeed in giving us an acceptable account of actuality, by going beyond actuality, it does present science and morality with ideas which have been helpful. Against such a point, one might say that this could be made a ground for preference for systematic metaphysics only if the description of the meaning of words can be merely descriptive. Can linguistic analysis describe without going beyond description ?

It will be found that it cannot do so, if we were to consider our description of the ethical concepts. It has been assumed by many linguistic analysts that the relation of philosophy to ethics is of the same sort as that between philosophy and physics.<sup>11</sup> This assumption has not stood the test of practice. Whatever the description that we give, say, of our use of moral words and, therefore, of our moral life ( and many have been given—Stevenson, Hare, Nowell-Smith etc. ), indirectly, through the suggestion of its validity, it becomes a plea for a particular kind of morality as against another. A neutral description is not possible. In the attempt to describe, there will also be stretching and squeezing of the concepts. And in this way

11. This assumption was not made by Wittgenstein. Hence "in a large class of cases I have found that the meaning of a word is its use." Presumably Wittgenstein was suggesting that in the case of the other concepts one will have to find out, by detailed examination of these concepts, whether their meaning could be described in terms of use.

the boundaries of these concepts are altered—extended.<sup>12</sup> If this is so it would appear that it is not possible to distinguish sharply between the doing of ethics and the doing of the philosophy of ethics. The relation between the two is much closer than the relation between philosophy and physics.

But are we right in saying this? Or, after all, this impression arises from the fact that our physical concepts are more stable; but over a longer period of time, they too undergo a change? It is true that this change, in modern times, has more often than not come about in the context of empirical work rather than in the context of speculative theorising. But speculative theorising also can play its role in changing the physical concepts.

But then, have we not turned a full circle? Between the concepts of philosophy I and the concept of philosophy II, we had distinguished by saying that the former are in some way concerned with the ideal, and the latter with the actual. But if we are right, then the latter is no more concerned with actual than the former. And there is truth in the claims one often hears, 'logical positivism is dead, metaphysics is back again', or the 'post-linguistic thaw' and so on. After all, linguistic philosophy was a fashion, and it has once again been reduced to what it should always have been. What makes all this dangerous is not that it is untruth, but that it is half-truth. It is true that the similarities between the systematic metaphysics and contemporary metaphysics are more than they were supposed to be. But there are differences also.

(i) The relation between ethics and philosophy of ethics is close; but is not close in the same way, in both systematic and linguistic philosophy. In the former the closeness consists in this that we can draw ethical conclusions from metaphysical foundations. In the latter, the closeness consists not in that metaphysics provides foundations for ethical conclusions but in the fact that the very process involved in ethical discussion and in philosophical discussion

12. What would happen, if instead of giving a single description of it it a particular moral category, the description of is giving as an essentially contested concept? (See W. B. Gallie's 'Essentially contested concept's in the importance of Language—Ed. Max Black) We do not go into this at present.



in general is similar—is concerned in some way with determining the boundaries of concepts. And it is this process of determining the boundaries of moral concepts that effects our moral life.

(ii) It is true that in the case of the physical concepts also the similarities are greater, but the differences are also equally great. There is an awareness of the difference between the ideal and the actual. This means, on the one hand, the necessity to give an empirical content to the ideal; and on the other the elimination of the contrast—reality vs. appearance etc.—in philosophical discussion.

But even then, can this awareness of the difference between the actual and the ideal not be a hindrance to the zest and enthusiasm so essential to the metaphysical pursuit? Even if this were to happen, there is also a gain. The gain will be and is evidenced in the clarity, precision, detailedness and directedness of discussion—e. g. Strawson's 'Individuals.'

The difference between the classical approach and the linguistic analytical approach may be understood and appreciated by contrasting the historical development from Hume and Kant to Hegel, with the development from Ayer ( *Language, Truth and Logic* ) to Wittgenstein ( *Philosophical Investigations* ) to the changes that are gradually taking place. In the former case, the different philosophies are so many isolated conflicting systems, one of which you have to accept and reject the other two. In the latter case, though there is conflict (between the views of the different philosophers, the work of the latter philosophers can also be seen to supplement the work of the earlier ones. It is much more of a cooperative venture in which each worker in the field brings his brick or bricks to complete the house; rather than one in which each constructs a house of his own.

The control of actuality over the philosophical activity, and the clear awareness of the difference between the ideal and the actual in a philosophical system enables us more fruitfully to study the historical systems—whether Western or Eastern, because one realises the importance of asking the question—how far the ideal—whether physical or moral—can be given an empirical content?

## IV

As I said at the beginning, instead of presenting a concept of philosophy as the concept of philosophy, I have explained a concept of philosophy in contrast and comparison with some other concepts. I have also indicated how I would like to do philosophy—I would like to do it the linguistic analytical way: and why, not because it excludes speculation; but because it involves a continuous awareness of the difference between actual description and speculation. I need not feel cut off from other ways of doing philosophy, nor from the past. But this does not mean that there is no change; whichever be one's approach to philosophy, significant work demands a much more detailed and precise discussion than it did ever before.

[The following were in substance, but not in expression, the remarks offered partly as a reply to the comments of other participants, but more as a clarification of the views expressed in the paper.]

\* \* \*

1. Never, perhaps, in the history of philosophy, has the development of a philosophical view been so piece-meal as in the case of linguistic philosophy. This is partly the result of the fact that, broadly speaking, linguistic analysis concentrates on discussing specific philosophical problems as independent problems rather than as pieces to be fitted in a jig-saw puzzle. (This is not true of the earlier stages of the linguistic movement, the stage which might be called the logical positivist stage.) Also, it is partly the result of the fact that the investigations carried out by the adherents of the school of linguistic analysis are more detailed than those carried out by the traditional schools of metaphysics. One consequence of this kind of development, has been that the different stages of development, in spite of their continuity and points of contact, have important differences between themselves—differences not only of detail, but of fundamental importance. And yet, very often, the different stages are lumped together, generally, as logical positivism, and criticisms are levelled against the movement as a whole, which may be made against only some one stage or other of its development. This is not to say that there may not be some criticism which may plausibly be

made against all the stages of the development of this movement. [ It is natural that there should be such criticisms because in spite of some differences there are also important agreements between the different stages. ]

2. One such criticism which may be made against all the stages of the development of this school is that this kind of philosophy is concerned with words and not with reality. It is true that adherents of the school have contributed to the plausibility of such criticism. But the ultimate plausibility of this criticism arises from two confusions. One is the confusion between, on the one hand being concerned only with words and not with reality, and on the other hand, being concerned with the use of words as a means of illuminating the nature of, form of, or structure of reality. The other is the confusion between, on the one hand, the mutual dependence of the form of reality as expressed in language and reality, and on the other hand, the assertion that there is no distinction between language and reality.

To take up the first confusion : if one were concerned only with words, such a concern would be pointless, or the point of it would be that of a game played with counters—or to put it differently, of a game which is of no significance beyond itself. But if one's concern for investigations into the use of words were a concern for the means of illuminating the nature of reality, then one could criticise the reliance on such means for the purpose of understanding reality, but one cannot criticise it for not being concerned with reality. It must be noted that the concern with reality which such investigations have is not of the same kind as the concern with reality which, for example the investigations and the conclusions of a scientist has. The briefest and perhaps the least misleading way of describing that concern would be to say that philosophy is concerned with the formal structure of reality and not with the content of reality. [ How far these two could be kept distinct, especially in the case of value words, is not always clear ].

This brings us to the other confusion : According to many members of this school, the form of language and the form of reality are mutually dependent and the reality of a particular kind could not be recognised as such independently of the form of language used in connection with that kind of reality. But this is not to say that



there is no distinction between language and reality. The word 'table' is not the table I see.

3. Another criticism that is made of this kind of thought is that according to it that alone is real which is verifiable by the senses, and that which is beyond the senses is not real.

The criticism, through it is often levelled against the whole movement, is plausibly applicable only to the earlier stages of the movement—the stage which has been called logical positivism and which is most appealingly put forth in Ayer's 'Language Truth and Logic'. But when one considers the later stages of the movement, the ultimate plausibility of the criticism arises from a confusion regarding the interpretation of the expressions "reality which is verifiable by the senses" and "reality beyond the senses". If by the expression "reality which is verifiable by the senses" is meant reality which is seen by the eyes, heard by the ears etc., then this school of thought does not restrict itself merely to such reality. If by the expression, reality which is verifiable by the senses' is meant reality for the verification of which seeing by the eyes etc., is *relevant*, then it restricts itself to reality verified by the senses. If by the expression "reality beyond the senses" is meant reality which is apprehended by intuition alone and not actualised in concrete situations, then reality beyond the senses is not accepted by this school of thought. But if by "reality beyond the senses" is meant reality which is not only the reality of colours, tastes, physical objects etc. or reality which is ultimately reducible to these, then reality beyond the senses is accepted by this school of thought. No longer does the movement deny ethical, aesthetic or religious reality as it did in its earlier stages.

The extension of linguistic investigations into these other fields has not always been very penetrating. Even now a good linguistic account of our aesthetic, ethical and religious concepts is not available. But this does not mean that in the case of these concepts this kind of approach is bound to fail. Before this is assumed or accepted, it is necessary that this kind of approach should be thoroughly worked out in relation to these concepts before we can finally say that the approach has failed. In any case it is only by this thorough trying out that the exact limitations of this kind of approach can be defined (e. g. it was only the work of Hume that clearly defined, the

limits of empiricism, and not the work of Locke or of Berkeley nor of their critics from the outside ).

4. Even if it is accepted that the linguistic approach can be extended significantly to other areas of reality, it might be said that this kind of approach would be one among many approaches. It cannot lay claim to greater validity than any other approach.

It is true that there are no criteria for deciding between different philosophical approaches. And yet it can be said in favour of the linguistic analytical approach that it gives an account of reality as we understand it to be, and in doing so it is not concerning itself only with words, nor is it ruling out reality beyond the senses, nor is it ruling out the possibility of extending the limits of our experience with or without the help of philosophy. As against this the traditional account of reality is not controlled by our actual understanding of reality, or is controlled by giving pre-eminence to only a particular aspect of reality. It presents us with an account of a possible world. It can become actual only if content is given to the form of the possible world, i. e. if the possible world is actualised. In this way the traditional account sets us a task ( to use a Kantian phrase ), and sometimes a task the means of achieving which are not at all clear. ( In so far as the linguistic analytical account sets a task, it sets a task with reference to the actuality, and therefore, perhaps, a more manageable task ).

## THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

DR. R. K. TRIPATHI

To understand the nature of a discipline we require to know three things : its field, its method and its aim or purpose. In the case of philosophy, the field has been so varied that it is rather hazardous to make any generalisation ; differences are no less regarding the questions of method ; nor is there any unanimity regarding the aim of Philosophy either. Under the circumstances therefore any inductive view of philosophy seems to be impossible : there appears to be no formula to which an exception cannot be found out. And if instead of evolving a common formula we simply accept a particular view and reject others, it would be pure dogmatism, unless one gives an objective principle of preference. What would be the factual value of such a view ? Not being descriptive, such a view would only be prescriptive and would not command acceptance. A serious predicament indeed.

But there is the other side of this desperate situation. There must be some common feature because of which the term philosophy is applicable to the variety of things called by this name. If this cannot be denied, what is that common feature ? This common feature is certainly not to be found either in the object or the method or in the aim. This, we believe, is to be found only in the form of consciousness of which philosophy is a product ; this is the factor which is not only common to all the various types of philosophy but is also a feature of philosophy distinguishing it at once from religion on the one hand and science on the other. So we begin with the question : What is the form or peculiar nature of philosophic consciousness ?

Normally our consciousness, is some kind of object-consciousness, i. e. it is naturally turned towards some kind of object ; this is because all life depends on object-consciousness ; consciousness can be useful in life only by being objective or by paying heed to objects. To be objective is the natural disposition of consciousness. But let us add that by object we do not here mean the physical object only but anything which confronts consciousness, anything other than consciousness to which it is directed. In the objective attitude consciousness is always directed forward to something else whether it be in the practical or in the theoretical sphere.

Had there been only an unbroken flow of this objective mode of



consciousness there would have been no philosophy; animals who can have no holiday from objective-consciousness can have no philosophy. Whatever else philosophy may be, it is certainly not any object-consciousness. Whatever be the differences regarding the definition of philosophy, nobody identifies it with a study of some object. Systems of philosophy do not profess or pretend to add to our stock of the knowledge of any kind of object. It is here that philosophy distinguishes itself at once from science and religion, both being forms of object-consciousness, which philosophy is not.

If not objective, what is the form of philosophic consciousness and how does it arise? Without mincing words, we may say that it is that form of consciousness in which instead of going forward toward an object, consciousness turns upon itself; instead of going ahead, it retraces or reviews; it becomes reflective. So philosophic consciousness is the reflective awareness of certain types of object-consciousness. A particular philosophy is always the self-consciousness of a particular kind of objective consciousness. Science, religion, art, morality, poetry, history, law etc. are all different kinds of object-consciousness, and as reflection is possible on all these we can have philosophy of science, of religion, of art, of language, of law, etc. Ordinarily man is interested in having objects, i. e. science, religion, art, etc. and not in reflecting on them. But at the same time it cannot be denied that sometimes instead of using or pursuing science, art, religion, etc. we like to ask what science, religion, art, etc. are, and this is the beginning of philosophy. What occasions this kind of self-consciousness or what is the value of it are questions to be taken up subsequently, but it is certain that such a kind of reflective consciousness is there as a matter of fact.

Although reflective consciousness is a fact, it is not a very common fact; reflection is but an occasional episode of life, and of the life of very few persons at that. This is but as it should be, because reflection being a suspension of the objective attitude is verily a hindrance to practical life. Reflection on seeing stops seeing even as reflection on doing stops doing. This obstruction or opposition is not one-sided; because just as reflection stops the objective flow of consciousness, absorption in the objective attitude no less prevents reflection. Ordinarily the world is so much with us that unless something serious happens we cannot reflect; we do not want to

reflect; something must happen to weaken the hold of the world on us; something to force us to turn back, something to awaken us.

What is it that forces us to turn back, to reflect? Is it curiosity or wonder that gives rise to reflection? Certainly not, if by curiosity or wonder is meant the propelling force of the objective-consciousness. Heidegger seems to have hit the mark in his interpretation of 'astonishment' as the origin of philosophy according to Plato and Aristotle. He says, "In astonishment we restrain ourselves. We step back, as it were, from being, from the fact that it is as it is and not otherwise. And astonishment is not used up in this retreating from the Being of Being, but, as this retreating and self-restraining it is at the same time forcibly drawn to and, as it were, held fast by that from which it retreats. Thus, astonishment is disposition in which and from which the Being of being unfolds".\* "So it is only if curiosity, wonder or astonishment means a kind of withdrawal or retreat and not a kind of forward movement of consciousness that it can be regarded as the origin of philosophy.

The occasion for this kind of withdrawal or retreat is either some kind of conflict or disillusionment; but since conflict itself is incipient disillusionment, we can say that reflection is always due to some kind of disappointment or frustration.† It is inconceivable how man would start taking interest in questions regarding truth or knowledge or validity without the experience of controversy or correction. We claim that every system of philosophy whether it be speculative dogmatism or positivism, scepticism or analysis, materialism or idealism, each one of these is at bottom an awareness of some wrong belief, a kind of correction or reflection. It is in this sense that our definition of philosophy as a kind of self-consciousness is most comprehensive. It is the experience of cancellation that impedes the free forward flow of consciousness; it is like our stumbling against a stone and looking back. When Plato turns from becoming to being, it is

\* *What is Philosophy*, p. 85

† Heidegger—*What is Philosophy*, p. 43 (The question about the nature of something awakens at those times when that, whose nature is being questioned, has become obscure and confused when at the same time, the relationship of man to what is being questioned, has become uncertain or has even been shattered.)

because of cancellation ; when the sceptic proposes to doubt everything it is because some correction has already taken place ; the positivist rejects metaphysics as Pseudo-science for the same reason ; the idealist and the realists in refuting each other exhibit the same feature ; dialecticians like Kant and Nagarjuna as well as speculative philosophers like Spinoza and Leibnitz are all disengaging themselves from some belief. All philosophy is reflection born of cancellation. Philosophy thus born will not be an exercise of reason or thought ; it will rather be a critical analysis of reason or thought. By critical analysis we mean the laying bare of or digging the presuppositions of reason or thought ; it is only by discovering the presuppositions that we can get rid of them and it is only by getting rid of them that we can know truth. Philosophy is therefore the deepening of this reflective process ; it is like boring into consciousness. It is neither an employment of a new method of knowledge nor the discovery of a new kind of object.

Certain consequences follow from this view. If reflection born of correction is the origin of philosophy it follows that it is not mere introspection or retrospection but a critical revaluation. Philosophic consciousness is a kind of revaluing or reassessment, and therefore always implies two levels of knowledge or experience, namely, the reassessment and the object of it. This is another way of saying that philosophic consciousness is search for truth, a search occasioned by the experience of falsity in some sphere or the other. Further, it is evident that the more universal the type of object-consciousness of which you want to have a philosophy, the more universal will your philosophy be, Consciousness of truth or reality being the most basic, the most fundamental consciousness, reflection on this mode of consciousness would naturally be the most fundamental philosophy. Also, it follows that philosophy need not be one ; by the very nature of case, there can be as many philosophies as there are objective modes of consciousness. Again, it is clear that since reflection is always possible only on some objective mode of consciousness, one cannot look at philosophy from outside as it is not an objective mode of consciousness at all. Reflection is always reflection on some objective consciousness. Reflection cannot turn upon itself ; there can be no self-consciousness of self-consciousness. Philosophy is the only discipline which defines itself in defining others, a discipline



which cannot define itself in the objective way. There can be no such thing as philosophy of philosophy, unless by philosophy we mean some kind of objective-consciousness, philosophy itself is philosophy of philosophy.

But are we not reflecting on philosophy? Yes; but that is because sometimes philosophy itself assumes an objective attitude. It happens like this. Reflection on an objective mode of consciousness arrests its forward flow, but then it is difficult to keep the objective mode of consciousness suspended for long. We have a natural objective disposition which reasserts itself with a vengeance by converting self-awareness itself into a kind of objective consciousness. It is this tendency which gives rise to dogmatic systems as it is due to an unconscious urge; it is this urge which Kant called metaphysics as a natural disposition; it might also be called transcendental illusion. To remain purely in the reflective attitude is like holding one's breath (something which cannot be done for long); unconsciously under the stress of natural disposition or transcendental illusion one slips into the objective mode and then philosophy ceases to be pure reflection. Controversies in philosophy are due to this slipping into the objective attitude.

We may put the same thing in a different way. The correcting of a belief may happen in two ways. One belief may be corrected by accepting another belief, a substitute belief; this is what may be called stunted or arrested reflection; here we start with rejecting one belief but end with having another. Another attitude in which discovery of a false belief may result is the rejection of believing itself i. e. the rejection of all views (drstis) as such. Where there is such an attitude we have philosophy as pure reflection or pure dialectic. A universal self-awareness of all views is nothing but the attainment of truth itself. A system of philosophy is thus either of the objective type or of the type of pure reflection. Even an objective type of philosophy being a kind of correction shares the general characteristic of being a kind of self-consciousness.

Philosophy not being an objective mode of consciousness cannot serve our animal existence which depends only on Objective consciousness. In other words, philosophy is useless for those who seek utility. It can be conceivably useful only to one who is tormented by the experience of conflict or the consciousness that the whole of

animal life may well be a deception. That is, philosophy can be useful only for one who has at least tentatively risen above the objective mode of consciousness or the animal consciousness. The results of philosophic reflection are not always quick at hand, and so the pursuit and cultivation of philosophic consciousness depends on faith, the faith, namely that the pursuit would bear fruit. Until one has attained truth it is this faith that would sustain philosophy. In this philosophy is like religion.

But science and religion both must be clearly distinguished from Philosophy. Russell has the acuteness to recognise this distinction when he says, "But between theology and science there is a No Man's land, exposed to attack from both sides ; This no Man's land is philosophy ( History of Western Philosophy, p. 10 ). It is true that philosophy is No Man's Land as it is not one of the many objective modes of consciousness but a surveyor of all. But it is confusing to suggest that it is midway between science and theology. Russell says so because he thinks that philosophy too is a kind of objective knowledge ; he does not see that in that case philosophy too would be like science and theology. Moreover, his view of philosophy is not true of all philosophy. He fails to see that philosophy is No Man's Land because it is reflection on all Men's Lands. When Hegel thinks of religion as incipient philosophy he makes the same mistake which Comte makes when he thinks of philosophy as incipient science ; the irony is that while both of them are reflecting, they fail to see that philosophy is reflection or a non-objective mode of consciousness. It is only when philosophy is mistaken as an objective mode of knowledge that it may be exposed to attack from both sides and not otherwise.

From the above account, it would appear that the Mādhyamika philosophy alone is philosophy proper, being purely reflective. Even Advaita which accepts a positive view of reality would be excluded. But really it is not so. Advaita Vedanta is next to none in criticising all the objective modes of consciousness or the objective categories. The reality which the Advaita accepts is not any object or subject but the ground of both ; even svarūpa lakṣaṇas are understood only negatively ( asat vyāvartako sat ). If the Advaita has positive metaphysics it is not because it is not reflective enough, but because it accepts Śruti as a necessary source of knowledge. Brahman

as the universal ground of everything is known not on the basis of reason but on the basis of revelation. The acceptance of *Sruti* is a necessity not merely for the knowledges of Brahman, but also for the knowledge that Brahman can be realised and can be realised here and now; it is not a mere matter of faith. Mere reflection, as in the case of *Mādhyaṃika*, can only show the presence of transcendental illusion giving rise to *dṛṣṭis*; only *śruti* can say that this illusion is actually removed. The *Mādhyaṃika* fails to see this point and holds only a negative attitude with the result that it remains uncertain, if not doubtful also—unless reference is made to some authority—whether it is actually possible to get rid of the transcendental illusion which is the inveterate source of all *dṛṣṭis*. Since the illusion is transcendental mere awareness of it cannot remove it immediately. Thus the *Advaita* would appear to be a more complete philosophy than the *Mādhyaṃika* which claims to be purer.

Philosophy is thus of a transcendent nature; it transcends all modes of objective consciousness; and there lies its distinction and its autonomy. It can be confused with Science and religion only by losing its transcendence or non-objective form. This transcendent character of philosophy reveals its value also; philosophy can have only a non-objective or non-pragmatic value. Not being interested either in the discovery of any particular type of objects or arrangements of facts or in discovering new methods of knowledge or in any thing objective, philosophy is of necessity an arm-chair affair, i. e. a reflection on what we already know. The merit of this definition is three fold: firstly, it keeps intact the autonomy of philosophy; secondly, it is true of all types of philosophy past, present and even future and is therefore not arbitrary; and finally, one cannot refute it except by accepting it unconsciously i. e. one refutes it only by being self-contradictory. Anyone who attempts to reject our definition would be himself reflecting, because rejection or correction means reflection. One cannot reject reflection without being reflective; reflection is the only universal feature of all philosophy.



## THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

### PROCEEDINGS

The first Seminar, held under the auspices of the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy Banaras Hindu University, was on "The Concept of Philosophy." It was held on the 22nd and 23rd March, 1965. Justice N. H. Bhagwati, Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University, inaugurated the Seminar on Monday, March 22, 1965, at 10. 30 A. M. in Room No. 137 of the Post-Graduate Arts Building. The Seminar was attended by a large number of scholars from all parts of India. Of the 37 delegates invited, 26 came and were lodged in the University Guest House, Gujrat House and the International House of the University. Teachers of the Department of Philosophy and sister Departments also attended the Seminar and participated in the discussions.

*First Day : Monday, March 22, 1965*

In inviting the Vice-Chancellor to inaugurate the Seminar on the Concept of Philosophy, Professor MURTI ( The Director of the Centre ) gave a short account of the setting up of the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, its organisational structure and the specific work undertaken at the Centre. Professor MURTI pointed out that owing to the outstanding work done here in Indian Philosophy, specially Buddhism, that Banaras was chosen as one of the three Centres of Advanced Study in Philosophy ; the other two are located at the Visva-Bharati University ( Santiniketan ) and at the Madras University—Although a number of additional teachers (one Professor, two Readers & two Research Associates ) and Research fellowship have been sanctioned, the entire Department of Philosophy must be deemed to be up-graded as a Centre of Advanced Study. This has been done with the view of attaining excellence and international standards in teaching and research in philosophy. The Centre has undertaken specifically the work of bringing out Source Books of Indian Philosophies and systems of philosophy. The University Grants Commission has made available liberal Grants for the holding of Seminars, for the building up of a research library and for the publication of books. It is hoped that in the course of a few years the Centre will really grow into an international forum of philosophy and attain the required excellence.

*Vice-Chancellor's Inaugural Address :*

The Vice-Chancellor remarked humorously that philosophers are more thinkers than men of action, and that perhaps accounted for the rather late convening of the Seminar. He commended the subject of the seminar and expressed the hope that some 'tangible results' would emerge out of the discussions. He cautioned against 'philosophy soaring too high and not sticking to the mother earth'. He paid a tribute to Professor T. R. V. Murti, the Director of the Centre who, inspite of his travels to all quarters of the globe, succeeded in establishing the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy at Banaras. He confessed that he was at the opposite pole to philosophic way of thinking, being essentially a man of action. He pleaded for the inclusion of Sri Aurobindo's thought in the Philosophy courses. In the end he wished all success to the Seminar.

The inaugural address was followed by the reading of papers and discussions thereon. Professor Rash Vihari Das was in the Chair.

## DISCUSSION

*Comments on Professor N. V. Banerjee's paper*

*Dr. Santosh Sengupta :* The scope of philosophy has been restricted to an analysis of human existence only. But there are modes of existence other than the human, e. g. God, value, etc. Philosophy has to take into account these modes of existence as well. Further, is philosophy also not factual, instead of being mere analysis ?

*Sri A. K. Mazumdar :* Why should supremacy be accorded to 'will' alone, while treating cognition as a suspect ? The formula 'I with others' requires clarification. Is it being used in the sociological sense only ?

*Prof. K. K. Banerjee :* Speculative philosophy has been condemned for its 'imponderables'. But Prof. Banerjee also has own 'imponderable' when he speaks of man's return to his 'authentic being'. The latter is a kind of 'imponderable.' Further, would philosophic controversy come to an end by rehabilitating man in the centre of the world-picture ? Controversy would still continue.

*Dr. S. S. Barlingay* : In the concept of 'I with others', Prof. Banerjee has failed to distinguish between the epistemological and ontological situations, and has committed the fallacy of mixing up ontological category with epistemological category.

*Dr. Prem Nath* : Instead of technology being a dehumanizing force, there is hardly anything as humanizing as technology. So also psychology, though a science, concentrates on man and has a humanizing effect.

*Dr. D. C. Mathur* : Historically, philosophy is a critical focus for organizing our beliefs in the light of experiences we encounter in ethics, religion etc. We cannot dictate to reality. Encounter with man or God can only be a starting-point for providing a critical and unifying focus of varied experiences.

*Dr. R. K. Tripathi* : Is the scientific study of nature quite on par with the philosophic analysis and appraisal of nature? Prof. Banerjee has not made sufficiently clear the orientation, method and end of the analysis of the human situation.

*Dr. R. S. Misra* : What is the force impelling us to overcome the 'otherness'? That has to be pin-pointed and the means for such overcoming indicated.

#### *Comments on Prof. J. N. Chubb's Paper*

*Dr. J. N. Mohanti* : In what sense could formal logic be said to have any ontological commitment? Further, it is not intelligible as to how an empirical system could be *a priori*.

*Dr. Santosh Sengupta* : How can the concept of God be basic to metaphysics? An atheistic metaphysics can lay equal claim to validity.

*Prof. K. K. Banerjee* : How does the idea of God as basic to metaphysics differ from the religious idea? This is not clear. In what sense is the idea of God *a priori*?

*Dr. P. K. Sen* : It seems that only a completely *a priori* system would satisfy Prof. Chubb. Though it is true that in all philosophic activity there must be some guiding *nissus*, why should this standpoint be that of 'God'? It is just an ultimate presupposition and has to be further clarified. Any definition of philosophy is question-begging, and presupposes some theory.



*Dr. Prem Nath* : Philosophy for Prof. Chubb is self-sustaining ; but does it not change from time to time, and would this not correspondingly alter the complexion of philosophy ?

*Dr. R. K. Tripathi* : What logic is to be employed for discussing the relation between logic and ontology ? Would it necessitate yet another logic for this, and so on *ad infinitum* ?

*Dr. R. S. Misra* : Mystic experience and revelation have been ruled out of court. Would Prof. Chubb give recognition to ontological awareness ? Without ontological awareness there would be no ontological commitment.

*Dr. Santosh Kumar* : When we refer to the idea of God as unique, there is a lurking suspicion that any idea which defies explanation and does not square with empirical facts could be termed 'unique'. 'God is the guiding notion of metaphysical thinking, but how do we know that this proposition is true ? It may have emotive meaning, but may not state anything true or false.

*Comments on Prof. K. J. Shah's paper*

*Dr. R. K. Tripathi* : Is not there something more valuable in philosophy than mere linguistic analysis ?

*Second Day,*

*Tuesday, March 23, 1965*

*( Morning Session )*

*Prof. R. N. Kaul was in the Chair*

*Prof. N. V. Banerjee : reply to objections*

There is a clear-cut distinction between the point of view of the person practising philosophy, and having a personal involvement in philosophic activity, and that of the spectator. From the point of view of personal involvement, a philosophy becomes 'the' philosophy, but for the spectator it is one system among others. For Prof. Banerjee, humanism is 'the' philosophy, not merely one philosophy among many. Many of the objections lose their relevance, because they are from outside, from the spectator's viewpoint. Such objec-

tions would not arise, when viewed from the point of view of personal involvement.

As for the 'imponderables', which sparked off so much controversy, it can only be repeated that man has been ignored by science. Mysticism also tends to do that. Philosophy alone can take note of man as a 'ponderable'. In every other discipline man is treated as an object among other objects. Man can be studied from two points of view : first, as an unavoidable biological phenomenon, and secondly, and secondly, not as an isolated individual but as a person, related in *essentiality* to his kind. This latter constitutes his authentic being. Empathy and sympathy are the ways in which man is stressed as a 'person', and not a mere individual.

#### *Afternoon Session*

Thakur Jaidev Singh was in the Chair

#### DISCUSSION

##### *Comments of Prof. Raj Narain's paper*

*Prof. D. C. Mathur* : If philosophic activity is principally conceptual clarification, than, what is meant by truth within a system ? What is the criterion of adequacy ?

##### *Comments on Prof. T. R. V. Murti's paper*

*Dr. P. K. Sen* : Both Prof. Murti and Dr. Tripathi have confined themselves to an analysis of subjectivity. But there are other problems in philosophy equally important, and an analysis of subjectivity does not seem to lead to their solution. Take for example the ancient problem of universals : what is the relation between this problem and analysis of subjectivity ? Likewise, the recent problem of 'entailment' in logic has nothing to do with an analysis of subjectivity.

*Dr. J. N. Mohanti* : How is the relation between the reflective and evaluative functions of philosophy to be conceived and made explicit ? Further clarification is needed with regard to the ultimate status of the 'metaphysical standpoint' ?

*Prof. K. K. Banerjee* : Both the Madhyamika and Advaita Vedanta are contentless, and their difference has not been made clear. Again, it seems that there are sources of philosophic consciousness other than what has been discussed here.

*Prof. Santosh Sengupta* : It is not shown as to how differences in philosophy are resolved or validated. The standpoint adopted has been chiefly cognitive, but no justification has been offered for this.

*Sri Kamalakar Misra* : If reflective activity is the universal feature of all philosophy, how is one to interpret those philosophical systems which admittedly are not reflective, e. g. the Vaishesika ? Reflection in some sense seems to be present in science as well ; how precisely is reflection in science to be distinguished from reflection in philosophy ?

*Comments on Dr. R. K. Tripathi's paper*

*Dr. J. N. Mohanti* : It is not quite correct to maintain that object-consciousness is pragmatic ; it can also be disinterested.

*Prof. Raj Narain : Reply to objections*

The theory of concepts offered here is like a 'phenomenology of concepts'. The definition of philosophy is not too restrictive and can at least claim to be an 'impartial' definition. Whether it is western philosophy or Indian, there is only one concept of philosophy, not several. Further, philosophy is not occupied with analysis but is also concerned with synthesis.

*Prof. T. R. V. Murti : reply to objections*

Any concept of philosophy must imply some theory, some metaphysical stand. As regards the knowledge of pure Being being direct and immediate, it is direct, not because there is no object to it, but rather because it has all the content. Trans-objective attitude does not mean contentlessness ; it is all the content.

The confusion in this regard can be traced to the fact that the



subject-object mode of knowledge is the only mode possible for us ; but more essential and imperative is direct acquaintance, for in all perception there is a moment when we are completely identical with the object. As for the retort that instead of saying 'I know the table' we should rather say 'I am the table', it has to be pointed that all differences stand on a unity. There is a deeper inexpressible unity underlying all differences. As to the question as to how the differences are validated then, we have to stress that the least that is expected of philosophy is that it should be coherent. A philosophical system should be coherent and well-knit.

The Madhyamika does not commit itself to ultimate ontological awareness of Being, while the Vedanta, though dialectical, is awareness of Being. It might appear that an attempt to propound a philosophy of philosophy may necessitate yet another philosophy in its own turn, and so on. This is however mere quibbling ; the theory of theories is not a theory, but an analysis or classification of theories. If therefore does not lead to another theory. Likewise, a philosophy of philosophies being a reflective awareness of what speculative philosophy is doing is not one more speculative attempt. It does not necessitate further classification or analysis so a regress is avoided :

*Prof J. N. Chubb : reply to objections*

Our objective is not to offer an impersonal and neutral definition of philosophy. There is no official answer to the question : what is philosophy ? As for the notion of 'ontological commitment', we have to make a distinction between critical and constructive philosophy. There is no ontological commitment in critical, philosophy which is merely a form of epistemological introspection. Philosophical reasoning is neither inductive nor deductive, nor transcendental deduction, taking an *a priori* road to the Absolute. It is a slow, intense and prolonged process, leading to the explication and maturation of a point of view which cannot be arrived at as a conclusion or consequence of reasoning. This point of view is the 'ontological commitment' ; it is alogical, not grounded in reason, but it is not irrational or suprarational. Ontological commitment is present in all reasoning, whether positive or negative. As to Prof. Mohanty's

objection that formal logic has no ontological commitment, we can retort that philosophy is not confined to formal logic alone.

The idea of God is basic to metaphysics and is unique. God is not a person, and nor is our account of God genetic. Atheism and materialism, resting on a denial of God, belong to the pre-critical level. The atheist argues like this: Let us see how the world looks like, when God has been banished. Either we have the idea of God, or we do not have it. We cannot prove this idea except through synonyms, nor can we communicate it to others. We can only say: 'we do not have this idea', and not 'we cannot have it'. To have this idea, a certain depth, maturity, sensitivity and a perceiving eye are needed. Even if God is an 'imponderable' for Prof. Banerjee we can ponder over the 'imponderable'. The idea of God is self-sustaining and unique, and is the only positive guiding nucleus.

*Prof. K. J. Shah : reply to objections*

Linguistic philosophy deals with 'words' which are not mere 'sounds'; they also stand for things and are concerned with God, morality, etc. Words could be concerned with things not verifiable by senses, so that we have ethical words, religious words and so on. But philosophy's concern with words is in fact a concern with 'form'; form is not substantiated by experience, though experience is a guide in that direction. A philosophic standpoint may not be the result of demonstration, but it must have a rational form. A philosophic idea or concept must operate in the context of living situations. A detailed discourse on language would give us a more detailed picture of life and reality.

*Dr. R. K. Tripathi : reply to objections*

The allegation that this philosophical position is itself a species of speculative philosophy is wild and unwarranted. Speculative philosophy takes as its point of departure some axioms, postulates, or *a priori* principles on which its structure is based. If philosophy is in essence reflection, how shall we characterize the non-reflective philosophical systems? We have to answer that if a philosophy corrects a belief, it cannot help being reflective. Correction of a

belief is itself reflection. As to the question whether reflection yields any results, we have to remember that though philosophy cannot supply us with objective goods, it can provide us with 'clarity.'

---

Dr. Raymond Panikkar then gave a resume of the papers read in his own picturesque manner.

On behalf of the delegates, Prof. A. G. Javadekar conveyed hearty thanks and gratitude for the arrangements made, rendering their stay in Banaras extremely comfortable.

Finally, Dr. R. K. Tripathi thanked the delegates for the inconvenience incurred in coming to Banaras. The Seminar owed any measure of success that it had to their active participation and fruitful contribution. He also warmly thanked his colleagues and volunteers for their cooperation and zest in making the various arrangements.

The Seminar then concluded.



## APPENDIX

### List of delegates visiting Banaras

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Professor Banerjee, K. K. | Jadavpur University, Calcutta. |
| 2. Professor Banerji, N. V.  | University of Delhi,           |
| 3. Mr. Barlingay, S. S.      | University of Delhi.           |
| 4. Dr. Biswas, S. C.         | Allahabad University.          |
| 5. Prof. Chubb, J. N.        | University of Bombay.          |
| 6. Shri Das, R.              | Calcutta.                      |
| 7. Dr. Dutta, S.             | University of Allahabad.       |
| 8. Dr. Devasenapathi, V. A.  | University of Madras.          |
| 9. Dr. Javadekar, A. G.      | Baroda University.             |
| 10. Prof. Jha, H. M.         | Patna University.              |
| 11. Mr. Khwaja, J.           | Aligarh Muslim University.     |
| 12. Mr. Majumdar, A. K.      | University of Calcutta.        |
| 13. Dr. Mathur, D. C.        | University of Rajasthan        |
| 14. Dr. Mohanty, J. N.       | University of Burdwan.         |
| 15. Dr. Prem Nath            | Panjab University.             |
| 16. Dr. Raj Narain           | Lucknow University.            |
| 17. Dr. Raman, N. S. S.      | Panjab University.             |
| 18. Mr. Kaul, R. N.          | Allahabad University.          |
| 19. Mr. Rege, M. P.          | Bombay University.             |
| 20. Dr. Sen, P. K.           | Jadavpur University,           |
| 21. Dr. Sengupta, S.         | Visva-Bharati University,      |
| 22. Dr. Shah, K. J.          | Karnatak University.           |
| 23. Prof. Sharma, C. D.      | Jabalpur University.           |
| 24. Dr. Siddiqui, Z. A.      | Aligarh Muslim University      |
| 25. Mr. Awasthi, C. S.       | Saugor University.             |
| 26. Dr. Sri Chand,           | Lucknow University.            |